



# MARYLAND STATE & D.C. AFL-CIO

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## **HB 1424 – Workgroup on the Post-COVID-19 Crisis Economic Transition House Economic Matters Committee March 30, 2022**

### **SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENT**

**Donna S. Edwards  
President  
Maryland State and DC AFL-CIO**

Chairman and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of HB 1424 – Workgroup on the Post-COVID-19 Crisis Economic Transition, with amendments. My name is Donna S. Edwards, and I am the President of the Maryland State and District of Columbia AFL-CIO. On behalf of the 340,000 union members, I offer the following comments.

Our economy is changing in Maryland, the United States, and globally. COVID-19 exposed and exacerbated existing problems within our economy, and revealed opportunities to improve the lives of workers and their families, should we make the correct policy choices in these unprecedented times. HB 1424 is a necessary step in determining those choices and how best we can take advantage of the changing economy, as well as how we can positively direct that change to benefit our state.

The effect that this pandemic had on Maryland's workforce and small businesses cannot be understated, and we must mitigate future harm with present action. HB 1424 is incredibly inclusive of the business community by including five members, but fails to include the labor experts. Without the expertise of the labor community which represents 90% of the workgroup's sectors to study and make recommendations the state is missing a huge chunk of information for future of work policy decision making. Plenty of representation on this workgroup exists to protect the profits of business, but there are no voices who will stand up for wages and benefits, and for the vast majority of workers in Maryland who will be impacted the most by HB 1424 and the policies that flow from the workgroup.

We do not seek worker representation on this workgroup for simple parity with business representation. Workers' voices and experiences are vital to the future success of most businesses. According to a 2019 report by New America, every food, grocery, and retail worker predicted a significant increase in technology in the future and a decline in the number of people working in their stores<sup>1</sup>. Many workers are pessimistic about the future for humans in their workplace, fearing their employers view them as a cost

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.newamerica.org/work-workers-technology/reports/worker-voices/executive-summary/>

they will cut through automation. That fear has only been exacerbated by this pandemic and stretches across more sectors of our economy.

With one amendment adding labor expertise, we can make HB 1424 representative of the entirety of Maryland's economy, by including workers along with businesses. Labor supports the bill with the following amendment, that will make HB 1424 conform with the cross filed bill, SB 782.

On page 1, after line 18:

“(4) five members of the labor sector, including representatives from the health care industry, cybersecurity industry, restaurant industry, childcare industry, and multi-industry labor organization, designated by the President of the Maryland State and District of Columbia AFL-CIO;”

**We ask for a favorable report with the above amendment on HB 1424.**