



MARYLAND STATE & D.C. AFL-CIO

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**SB 782 – Workgroup on the Post-COVID-19 Crisis Economic Transition
House Economic Matters Committee
March 30, 2022**

SUPPORT

**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 SB 782 – Workgroup on the Post-COVID-19 Crisis Economic Transition, as amended in the Senate. 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. SB 782 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 cannot be understated, and we must mitigate future harm with present action. 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 stores¹. Many workers are pessimistic about the future for humans in their workplace, fearing their employers view them as a cost they will cut through automation. That fear has only been exacerbated by this pandemic and stretches across more sectors of our economy.

With five business community members on the workgroup, SB 782, as originally introduced, was inclusive of the interests and needs of business in Maryland. Thankfully, the Senate

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

amended the bill to add five members of the labor community. With the amendments, workers' expertise and concerns will work with businesses in developing an economy that's works for all, and for the vast majority of workers in Maryland who will be impacted the most by SB 782 and the policies that flow from the workgroup.

We ask for a favorable report on SB 782.