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SB 256 – Maryland Energy Administration – Resiliency Hub Grant Program and Fund Senate Finance Committee February 1, 2022

SUPPORT

**Donna S. Edwards
President
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Madam Chair and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of SB 256 – Maryland Energy Administration – Resiliency Hub Grant Program and Fund. My name is Donna S. Edwards, and I am the President of the Maryland State and District of Columbia AFL-CIO. On behalf of Maryland's 340,000 union members, I offer the following comments.

Natural disasters and extreme weather events can knock out entire communities and prevent them from effectively responding to crises. With no planning or local infrastructure in place, lives will be lost, neighborhoods will be eviscerated, and with the growing threat of climate change-induced extreme weather events, low-income communities – that lack the resources for mitigation planning – will face more frequent threats in the future.

Resiliency hubs offer a local solution for communities for immediate response to a local crisis. These hubs are community-serving facilities that support residents, coordinate communication, distribute resources, and reduce carbon pollution while enhancing quality of life¹. This bill sets up grant funding to help lower-income communities construct resiliency hubs and serve their residents.

But SB 256 goes a step further by mandating strong labor standards for grant funding eligibility. To receive a grant, the following labor standards must apply to the workers of all the contractors and subcontractors on the project: Career Advancement, the right to Collectively Bargain, Paid Leave, Unemployment Insurance and Workers' Compensation verification, Health Insurance, and a salary of at least 150% of minimum wage. Moreover, it also demands that funding only go to businesses that have been in compliance with Federal and State wage and hour laws for the preceding three years.

¹ <http://resilience-hub.org/what-are-hubs/>

Our grant funding should reflect our values. When we invest taxpayer dollars into resiliency hubs, we need to demand that the workers who will build and maintain them are being treated with dignity and respect. We are investors in these resiliency hubs, and, as an investor, we should have demands on what our investment should produce. If we do not, then workers – the investors – are paying taxes to create low-quality jobs for other workers.

We support communities building resiliency hubs to serve their residents with mandated labor standards tied directly to the grant funding.

For these reasons we ask for a favorable report on SB 256.