



# MARYLAND STATE & D.C. AFL-CIO

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## **SB 525 – Public Utilities – Energy Distribution Planning and Required Labor Standards Senate Finance Committee February 15, 2022**

### **SUPPORT**

**Donna S. Edwards**

**President**

**Maryland State and DC AFL-CIO**

Madam Chair and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of SB 525 – Public Utilities – Energy Distribution Planning and Required Labor Standards. 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.

For the past several years, a discussion has been building in Annapolis among policy makers and legislators regarding the future of energy in Maryland. There is a growing call to upgrade our power grid for greater efficiency and to handle the changes that are coming to power generation and distribution due to the growth of renewable and carbon-free energy, as well as the need for adaptation and mitigation from the effects of climate change. As we speak, the Public Service Commission (PSC) is beginning the process of Energy Distribution Planning for the future. It would be a mistake if we sat idly by as plans were made around us.

SB 525 is an historic opportunity for us to work with the PSC to direct what our energy distribution future should look like. With the creation of the Distribution System Planning Workgroup, multiple stakeholders will be engaged in planning for our energy future. Most notably, workers – those with the expertise in generation, distribution, and climate change adaptation and mitigation – have a voice in this process through appointment to the workgroup. Additionally, and of even greater importance, the workgroup is charged with studying and making recommendations for distribution planning that promotes labor standards in all elements of electric grid modernization. The input of workers on the workgroup, and the inclusion of required labor standards in promulgated regulations is vital to the future of energy in Maryland as we are looking toward a global energy transition over the next few decades.

Additionally, SB 525 requires that all contractors and subcontractors working on our electrical grid and distribution system pay Prevailing Wage, participate in a registered apprenticeship

program, offer health care and retirement, have a goal of 25% of total work hours performed by Maryland residents, and have complied with federal and state wage and hour laws for the previous three years. This commonsense measure ensures that a higher quality workforce is building Maryland's energy infrastructure of the future. If we invest in building it correctly, we will save tremendous resources on having to fix, upgrade, or correct problems in the future. Ratepayers deserve the highest skilled workforce, and our clean energy future demands it.

**For these reasons we ask for a favorable report on SB 525.**