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**SB 524 – Public Utilities – Energy Efficiency and Conservation Programs –
Energy Performance Targets and Low-Income Housing
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 SB 524 – Public Utilities – Energy Efficiency and Conservation Programs – Energy Performance Targets and Low-Income Housing. 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.

Taxpayer funding for any program should reflect our values. When we invest taxpayer dollars into increased energy efficiency programs for Marylanders, we need to demand that the workers doing the weatherization are paid good wages and benefits to ensure that they are not added to the working families struggling to make ends meet and eligible for these programs being installed by their employer.

We are investors in these energy efficiency projects, and, as an investor, we should have demands on what our investment should produce. If we do not, then these hard-working Marylanders, the beneficiaries of these energy efficiency projects, are paying taxes to create low-quality jobs for other workers. In effect, they would be investing in bringing down the quality of life for all workers. We cannot allow that to happen. Increasing DHCD funding to procure or provide energy efficiency and conservation programs for those in need is an integral and necessary move to help these working families.

However, we cannot simply use workers' taxpayer money to procure the cheapest goods and services to get the job done. SB 524 increases DHCD funding for these critical programs and demands high labor standards for a contractor to be added to the Department's approved contractor list. To be approved 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, employer provided health insurance, and a salary of at least 150% of minimum wage. Moreover, it also demands that funding only go to businesses that have followed Federal and State wage and hour laws for the preceding three years.

We need to help Marylanders struggling to make ends meet by investing in making their homes more energy efficient, and we need to ensure that every dollar we spend is advancing our values to create family-sustaining careers. We must do both.

For these reasons we ask for a favorable report on SB 524.