



MARYLAND STATE & D.C. AFL-CIO

AFFILIATED WITH NATIONAL AFL-CIO

7 School Street • Annapolis, Maryland 21401-2096

Balto. (410) 269-1940 • Fax (410) 280-2956

President

Donna S. Edwards

Secretary-Treasurer

Gerald W. Jackson

SB 835 - Public Schools – Heating, Ventilation, and Air-Conditioning Systems and Carbon Dioxide Monitors – Monitoring and Reporting Requirements

Senate Budget and Taxation Committee

March 7, 2023

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 835. 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 300,000 union members, I offer the following comments.

Nearly 900,000 students attended public schools in Maryland in the 2021-2022 school year. Another 123,009 full time employees work to serve our state's public education system.¹ The air quality of public schools impacts every county in Maryland. Poor air quality can lead to allergies, asthma, headaches, congestion, and the spread of infectious diseases. The COVID-19 pandemic forced air quality issues into the spotlight. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention issued guidance, "Ventilation system upgrades or improvements can increase the delivery of clean air and dilute potential contaminants. Consult experienced heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) professionals when considering changes to HVAC systems and equipment."² Our students and educators deserve safe learning environments. SB 835 requires all schools to be inspected by certified professionals and fix any issues with existing HVAC systems.

Federal money is available to assist with this project. Through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill, over \$500 million is available through block grants issued by the Department of Energy's Energy Efficiency Conservation Program. Schools are also eligible for \$122 billion through the Elementary and Secondary Schools Emergency Relief (ESSER) Fund as part of the American Rescue Plan. This is clearly a federal priority and failure to act now will only increase the long term costs of these projects.

We urge a favorable report for SB 835.

¹ Maryland State Department of Education, "Maryland at a Glance."

² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "Ventilation in Buildings." June 2, 2021.