



MARYLAND STATE & D.C. AFL-CIO

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**HB 597 / SB 470 - Growing Apprenticeships and the Public Safety Workforce (GAPS) Act
House Judiciary Committee & Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
March 6, 2024**

SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS

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 HB 597 / SB 470 with specific amendments. 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.

Throughout the entire Apprenticeship 2030 Commission process, which is still ongoing, labor has remained united behind many basic principles of what apprenticeships should be. We have uniformly opposed attempts at expanding the role of outside apprenticeship sponsors without further study. We have also made clear that unionized workers should always have a right to bargain collectively over apprenticeship programs.

HB 597 and SB 470 expands the Law Enforcement Cadet Apprenticeship Program to now be the Public Safety Apprenticeship Program, allowing public safety agencies like firefighting, police, and emergency medical services to participate.

The Maryland State & DC AFL-CIO has fully participated in the Apprenticeship 2030 Commission. The General Assembly tasked this commission with studying the future of registered apprenticeships in order to hit the state's goals in the Blueprint for Maryland's Future. The Commission issued its interim report prior to the session and its recommendations represent a consensus viewpoint. More controversial proposals were removed or held back for further study.

We reject any amendments that make references to apprenticeship sponsors or intermediaries. It is too early to bring in third parties into these apprenticeships without allowing the Apprenticeship 2030 Commission and state the time to study the issue.

We also reject any form of the bill that does not include a guaranteed right for unionized workers to bargain over these programs.

As such, we support the Governor's proposed amendments to these bills and encourage the committee to reject any other amendments. After these amendments, we urge a favorable report on HB 597 and SB 470.