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**Written Testimony to the Maryland Senate Finance Committee
SB 231 – State Government – Public Employee Relations Act – Alterations
January 16, 2025**

Favorable with Amendments

Chair Beidle and Members of the Committee,

AFT-Maryland, which represents city, county and state employees, supports SB 231, which proposes revisions to the Public Employee Relations Act (PERA). AFT-Maryland supports the continued development and refinement of PERA and appreciates the Public Employee Relations Board's efforts to ensure fair and effective representation for public employees.

However, we are concerned about specific provisions in SB 231 that would interfere with longstanding state law regarding dues deduction for executive branch employees. The proposed language, which ties dues deduction to a union's representational status, undermines Maryland's historic commitment to respecting employees' rights to free association.

Since 1983, Maryland law has allowed executive branch employees to support a union through payroll-deducted dues. This serves as a foundation for employee solidarity, enabling workers to support unions and one another, even when they do not yet have collective bargaining rights.

The language tying dues deduction to representational status is unnecessary. Current law allows employees to revoke their dues deductions at any time. Altering this long-established law risks destabilizing a system that has empowered employees for decades.

AFT-Maryland urges the Committee to amend SB 231 to remove lines 4-14 on page 2 and any proposed changes to Md. Code State Govt. § 22-209. These provisions threaten to erode employees' rights to free association and their ability to support unions voluntarily.

With these amendments, AFT-Maryland supports SB 231 and its broader intent to strengthen the Public Employee Relations Act. We urge the Committee to protect the rights of Maryland's public employees by ensuring that dues deduction remains separate from representational status.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

