



## MARYLAND STATE & D.C. AFL-CIO

*Affiliated with the National AFL-CIO*

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### **SB 857 - Labor and Employment - Civic and Related Activities - Protection (Maryland Employee Civic Activity and Lawful Expression Protection Act)**

#### **Senate Finance Committee**

**March 11, 2026**

#### **SUPPORT**

**Donna S. Edwards**

#### **Maryland State and DC AFL-CIO**

Madame Chair and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of SB 857. On behalf of 700 affiliated unions, I offer the following comments.

Maryland workers should not have to choose between their jobs and their First Amendment rights. SB 857 ensures that workers can participate in civic activities including campaigning, volunteering, and organizing, without fear that their employer will discipline them for it.

This legislation importantly recognizes that every worker, regardless of job title, schedule, or employment status, deserves the freedom to express themselves without fear of retaliation. Its protections make clear that regardless of job title, schedule, or employment status, that workers deserve the freedom to express themselves without fear.

Civic expression is important now more than ever. In 2025, thousands of Marylanders flooded the streets for “No Kings” rallies as communities grappled with complex issues such as our eroding democracy, public safety, education, and economic justice. Workers are often closest to the real-world impacts of these decisions and have the power to shift public debate. It is imperative that workers have the right to speak up and express themselves freely. Protecting civic expression is not just a workplace issue, it is a democratic safeguard.

SB 857 affirms that Maryland’s democracy is stronger when workers have the freedom to speak up, and our state is more powerful because of it.

For these reasons, we urge a favorable report on SB 857.



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