



MARYLAND STATE & D.C. AFL-CIO

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**HB 881 - Election Law - Voting by Absentee Ballot - Prepaid Postage for Return of Ballots
House Ways and Means Committee
February 18, 2020**

SUPPORT

**Donna S. Edwards
President
Maryland State and DC AFL-CIO**

Madam Chair and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 881 - Election Law - Voting by Absentee Ballot - Prepaid Postage for Return of Ballots. My name is Donna S. Edwards, and I am the President of the Maryland State and DC AFL-CIO. On behalf of the 340,000 union members in the state of Maryland, I offer the following comments.

Removing barriers to voting is of paramount importance for a vibrant and functioning democracy. Under current law, a voter must pay for postage to return their absentee ballot, creating a monetary disincentive to vote. HB 881 corrects this by requiring local boards of election to provide pre-paid return envelopes for absentee ballots. To help defray the cost to the local boards, the State Board of Elections will pick up 50% through reimbursement.

HB 881 also provides the voter with a choice: to use the pre-paid envelope, as-is, or to provide their own postage, to lessen the cost for the local board of elections.

Eliminating any barrier to voting, while giving voters more choices, and requiring the State Board of Elections to pick up half the cost, is the right thing to do. Unions support all efforts to expand voting rights to more citizens, and to remove existing barriers to voter participation.

We ask for a favorable vote on HB 881.