



A Union of Professionals  
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**Written Testimony from American Federation of Teachers-Maryland  
HB 964 – State Operating Budget – Step Increases for State Employees – Reporting  
Before the House Appropriations Committee  
March 10, 2022  
SUPPORT**

Good afternoon, Chair McIntosh and the members of the House Appropriations Committee. AFT-Maryland, the state federation for numerous state employee unions in Maryland, including Maryland Professional Employees Council (representing professional state workers in unit G) and AFT Maryland-Healthcare (representing state healthcare workers in unit E), as well as faculty at the Maryland School for the Deaf, calls for a favorable report to HB 964.

It would be difficult to find a state agency in Maryland that is not undergoing a staffing crisis; indeed, news reports have focused on several state agencies where the staffing levels are so dire, professional accreditation is threatened, as is the ability for our state to regulate its own drinking water. The lack of qualified, experienced state employees in numerous state agencies—some with staffing vacancies over 25%!—has not only hindered the state's ability to provide quality services to Maryland residents, in some cases it has led to issues to safety for the people of Maryland.

This crisis has been years in the making. Certainly, the role that the pandemic has had on employment in the state generally, and employment in state agencies specifically, is significant. However, the staffing crisis began well before 2020; in 2015, the state employee vacancy rate first neared 10%, and hasn't been below 10% since then. The refusal of the executive branch of government in this state to fund mandated state-employee step increases has directly contributed to the inability of our agencies to offer competitive pay and benefits in order to recruit and retain the staff necessary for our agencies to fulfill their mission.

If the governor chooses to not fund requisite step increases for state employees, this bill will require the executive to explain to the legislature why that decision was made. The bill, if enacted, would provide a level of transparency to residents in Maryland in general, and state employees providing services on behalf of Maryland in specific, as to decisions and priorities of the executive when it comes to staffing our state agencies. Again, AFT-Maryland calls for a favorable report to HB 964. Thank you.