



# MARYLAND STATE & D.C. AFL-CIO

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## **HB 61 - Utility Contractors - Employment and Licensure - Requirements and Application House Economic Matters Committee February 16, 2023**

### **SUPPORT**

**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 61. 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.

HB 61 clarifies a section from the 2022 Climate Solutions Now Act requiring gas, electric, and investor-owned electric companies to pay prevailing wage, offer healthcare, provide retirement plans, participate in registered apprenticeships, create a plan for local hiring of workers, follow state and federal wage and hour laws, comply with state reporting requirements, and hold all necessary licenses for the work they were doing. HB 61 removes an unnecessary provision that limited these requirements only to the portions of the projects that were funded with federal money. HB 61 also expands the number of apprenticeship programs eligible for compliance with the section's provisions, adding U.S. Department of Labor registered apprenticeships in addition to state registered apprenticeships.

As we move from a traditional energy economy to a clean energy economy it is vital that we are creating a policy and regulatory framework that ensures we are bolstering family-sustaining careers and not just creating dead-end jobs. We know that meeting Maryland's climate goals requires expanding state electricity production multiple times its current levels and expanding the grid's capacity by similar amounts. This means a massive amount of work in energy generation, transmission, and infrastructure over the coming decade. Renewable energy generation, transmission, and storage are the growth industries of the future. For these projects it is paramount that we apply labor standards. We must hold these new energy jobs to a high standard now, ensuring that we are setting up the next generation of workers to be as successful as the ones that precede them. The Maryland State & DC AFL-CIO is fully dedicated to ensuring that climate jobs become good jobs. At our 2022 Convention, delegates unanimously passed a resolution in support of these efforts, attached to this testimony.

We urge the committee to issue a favorable report for HB 61.

## **Resolution on Climate Change and Jobs**

**WHEREAS**, numerous studies suggest that there is major job creation potential from tackling the climate crisis, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and transitioning to a low-carbon, sustainable economy; and

**WHEREAS**, the overall lack of high-road jobs in the green economy and the prevalence of non-union jobs in the limited existing green sectors, such as solar and residential retrofitting, have dampened enthusiasm for the long-promised “clean, green economy” among workers and labor organizations that are anxious to address the climate crisis and build a pro-worker, equitable green economy; and

**WHEREAS**, the growing clean energy sector, driven by the dictates of its investors, in many cases does not provide the high-quality union jobs that exist in traditional energy and manufacturing industries, and it is highly reliant on imported goods

**WHEREAS**, the fossil fuel industries have high rates of unionization. The high-quality jobs held by union members across our economy in sectors producing or using fossil energy are at risk, as well. Fossil-fuel production and use has not only provided the energy that made our modern economy, but also supports union jobs in a broad range of sectors— energy production, manufacturing, transportation and more; and

**WHEREAS**, strong job and training quality standards are needed in the clean and renewable energy sector, among them being prevailing wage, state-approved apprenticeship job training requirements, project labor agreements, and labor peace agreements; and

**WHEREAS**, a functioning jobs pipeline could ensure that local workers from our communities have a path to career employment by offering access to training programs such as direct-entry pre-apprenticeship programs and other skill-building opportunities; and

**WHEREAS**, these job and training quality standards should be central to all “climate jobs” proposals; and

**WHEREAS**, climate efforts should include funding and guaranteed protection for workers and communities who are displaced or negatively affected by the transition to a low-carbon economy; and

**WHEREAS**, the AFL-CIO has developed strong policy proposals for protecting workers who are impacted by climate protection policies. These proposals provide a just transition, including 70% wage replacement and 80% health benefit replacement for up to three years, as well as “bridge to retirement” funding for workers who are near retirement.

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, the Maryland State and District of Columbia AFL-CIO supports measures that ensure that energy infrastructure development creates good jobs and builds our industrial base by requiring project labor agreements, prevailing wage, apprenticeship job training requirements, Buy Union and Buy America provisions, labor peace, card check neutrality, robust training requirements for all projects, and includes all the labor requirements passed in the Clean Energy Jobs law.

**THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, the Maryland State and District of Columbia AFL-CIO in facing the challenge of impacting energy policies embraces a balanced and just approach for workers, communities, manufacturers, businesses and consumers and will continue to work with community, business and environmental allies committed to recognizing the need for worker protections, rights, and sustainable wages and benefits, to maintain a wide range of energy sources, traditional and newer, to secure Maryland’s and the District of Columbia’s competitiveness.

**THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Maryland State and District of Columbia AFL-CIO will, in every forum, demand that clean energy technologies be mined, produced, constructed, and operated under union contracts. The growth of the clean energy economy cannot provide cover for employers that want to operate nonunion and must provide the high-quality jobs that Americans want and deserve.

**THEREFORE, BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED**, that the Maryland State and District of Columbia AFL-CIO will advocate for legislation, administrative rules, and the development of an initiative to enable a transition that is just for workers and communities directly affected by the transition to a clean energy economy by providing income, benefit, and retraining for comparable wage jobs, as well as a bridge to retirement, as part of the just transition and concurrently support the creation of these policies in an equitable fashion.