



**Maryland
Public Health
Association**

***Mission:** To improve public health in Maryland through education and advocacy*

***Vision:** Healthy Marylanders living in Healthy Communities*

**HB 722 – Labor and Employment – Occupational Safety and Health
Heat Stress Standards**

Hearing Date: 2/25/20

Committee: House Economic Matters Committee

Position: SUPPORT

Thank you Chairman Davis, Vice-Chair Dumais, and all members of the House Economic Matters Committee for the opportunity to provide support for HB 722. Thank you, especially, Delegate Charkoudian and co-sponsors for introducing this important public health legislation to establish Heat Stress Standards in Maryland. We submit this testimony on behalf of the Maryland Public Health Association to express our support for HB 722: Labor and Employment – Occupational Safety and Health -- Heat Stress Standards.

While heat exposure has been a long-standing concern in occupational health and safety, there are very few protections in place for workers, and no regulated national standards. As climate change increases temperatures across the country, protections for the labor force, particularly outdoor workers, has never been more important. A key tenet of public health is prevention, and our responsibility is to make sure protections are in place to prevent heat-related deaths and illnesses. Numerous scientific reports illustrate how more frequent, longer, and more intense seasonal and annual warming trends significantly impact public health. Warming, as projected for Maryland, is expected to cause a wider range of heat-related injury and death. Workers exposed to higher heat are generally four times more likely to be hospitalized for things like heat related confusion, injury, rashes, nausea, muscle spasms, kidney injury and heat stroke. Construction workers are 13 times more likely to die from heat-related illness.¹ Even a single eight to ten-hour shift at 100F, could lead to death. The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that between 1992 and 2016, excessive heat killed 783 US workers and seriously injured 69,374.² The costs to workers, employers, and the Maryland economy could become untenable as temperatures rise.

Fortunately, heat-related deaths and illnesses are preventable. We commend the sponsors of this bill for bringing this issue up for discussion with proposed legislation. So far, California, Washington, Minnesota and the U.S. Military are the only jurisdictions with worker protections. Maryland can be next. We support the development of heat stress standards for indoor and outdoor worker safety by sooner than October 2022, and appreciate considerations for training and record keeping. We also hope the language in this bill could be clarified to explicitly include indoor and outdoor workers, especially the construction and agricultural workers who are most directly impacted by warming trends.

¹ Acharya P, Boggess B, Zhang K. Assessing Heat Stress and Health among Construction Workers in a Changing Climate: A Review. *Int J Environ Res Public Health*. 2018;15(2):247. Published 2018 Feb 1. doi:10.3390/ijerph15020247

² Public Citizen. As Climate Heats Up, Government Must Protect Workers from Heat. July 17, 2018, accessed Feb. 18, 2020: <https://www.citizen.org/news/as-climate-heats-up-government-must-protect-workers-from-heat/>

The Maryland Public Health Association (MdPHA) is a nonprofit, statewide organization of public health professionals dedicated to improving the lives of all Marylanders through education efforts and advocacy of public policies consistent with our vision of healthy Marylanders living in healthy communities. MdPHA is the state affiliate of the American Public Health Association, a nearly 145-year-old professional organization dedicated to improving population health and reducing the health disparities that plague our state and our nation.

Additional works cited:

2019 Lancet Countdown on Health and Climate Change: Policy Brief for the U.S.

<https://www.lancetcountdownus.org/2019-lancet-countdown-us-brief>

Lancet Planetary Health, articles on worker productivity and health:

- 1) [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanplh/article/PIIS2542-5196\(18\)30237-7/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanplh/article/PIIS2542-5196(18)30237-7/fulltext)
- 2) [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanplh/article/PIIS2542-5196\(18\)30240-7/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanplh/article/PIIS2542-5196(18)30240-7/fulltext)

Maryland Climate and Health Profile Report (2016):

https://phpa.health.maryland.gov/OEHFP/EH/Shared%20Documents/Climate%20Change/Reports/MD_climate_and_health_FullReport_04182016%20Final.pdf

NASA's Climate Report:

<https://climate.nasa.gov/>

NIOSH Criteria for a Recommended Standard: Occupational Exposure to Heat and Hot Environments & related tools:

- 1) <https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/docs/2016-106/default.html>
- 2) <https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/heatstress/default.html>

NOAA's 2019 State Climate Summary for Maryland and D.C.:

<https://statesummaries.ncics.org/chapter/md/>

OSHA Heat-Related Illness standards & recommendations:

- 1) NIOSH's Recommended Heat Standard:
<https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/heatstress/standards.html>
- 2) Using the Heat Index: A Guide for Employers:
https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/heatillness/heat_index/pdfs/all_in_one.pdf
- 3) Monitoring Workers at Risk of Heat-related Illness:
https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/heatillness/heat_index/monitoring_workers.html