



MARYLAND STATE & D.C. AFL-CIO

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**HB 439 – Workers’ Compensation – Occupational Disease Presumptions – 9-1-1 Specialists
House Economic Matters Committee
February 15, 2022**

SUPPORT

Donna S. Edwards

President

Maryland State and DC AFL-CIO

Chairman and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 439 – Workers’ Compensation – Occupational Disease Presumptions – 9-1-1 Specialists. 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.

9-1-1 Specialists deal with unimaginable stress as they receive frantic calls from Marylanders who are facing loss of life, limb, and loved ones. Some workers suffer from PTSD, having to hear the pained voices of people experiencing the worst situations in their lives. They do this job, day-in and day-out, keeping all of us safe. Unfortunately, we do not treat these front-line heroes with the care that they deserve, when they suffer with mental health issues due to the service they provide for our communities.

HB 439 corrects this by creating a presumption in Workers’ Compensation law for post-traumatic stress disorder for 9-1-1 Specialists. The job these workers perform is some of the most emotionally draining that any worker could experience, and we cannot take their experiences lightly. We need to provide them with the support they need, ensuring they do not suffer in silence for the service they render to all of us.

By definition, Maryland’s 9-1-1 Specialists are the very first people to respond in a crisis. They receive the calls from very distressed residents, looking for immediate help in dangerous situations. They move quickly to see that the appropriate help is dispatched, immediately. Our 9-1-1 Specialists put the “First” in First Responder, and we need to treat them as such. We need to take care of them when they suffer trauma at work.

We urge a favorable report on HB 439.