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MAYOR

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SB 10

March 8, 2022

TO: Members of the Senate Finance Committee
FROM: Natasha Mehu, Director, Office of Government Relations
RE: Senate Bill 10 – Worker Compensation – COVID-19 Occupational Disease Presumption
POSITION: OPPOSE

Chair Kelly and Vice Chair Feldman and Members of the Committee, please be advised that the Baltimore City Administration (BCA) **opposes** Senate Bill (SB) 10.

SB 10 establishes that first responders, public safety employees, and health care workers are presumed to have an occupational disease that is compensable under workers' compensation law after a positive test or diagnosis for COVID-19. The bill applies retroactively to March 1, 2020. The bill is also an emergency measure effective upon $\frac{3}{5}$ members of each House of the General Assembly. Finally, the bill remains in effect until July 31, 2023, at which time it will be abrogated with no further action by the General Assembly.

Worker compensation does not traditionally provide coverage for the cold, flu, or other community-spread illnesses that have no direct tie to the workplace. While COVID-19 has been devastating to the public health of all members of society as it is a community-spread illness that isn't particularly tied to workplace environments. The BCA is concerned with extending worker compensation without the scientifically-backed evidence to support such a presumption specifically for the occupations noted in the bill. For instance, in the City, the exposure numbers for public safety personnel are reportedly below the exposure numbers for the general public (23% for the general public and 12% for the police department). We are also concerned that this will create or exacerbate inequities in the benefits that certain occupations receive over others who also work in environments with high levels of contact with the public.

For these reasons, we respectfully request an **unfavorable** report on SB 10.