



City Union of Baltimore

Local 800, AFT, AFL-CIO

President

Antoinette Ryan-Johnson

**Written Testimony Submitted to the
Maryland Senate Finance Committee
HB 176: Labor and Employment – Occupational Safety and Health – Revisions
Davis Martinez Public Employee Safety and Health Act
March 25, 2025
SUPPORT**

Good afternoon Chair Beidle, Vice Chair Hayes, and members of the Senate Finance Committee. My name is Antoinette Ryan-Johnson, and I am a public employee who has been working for the City of Baltimore for over almost 28 years. I am also the president of the City Union of Baltimore, AFT Local 800, the labor union representing thousands of city employees working in various different city agencies. In these capacities, I urge a favorable report to HB 176.

Of particular interest to us in CUB is the provision of this bill that would lift the monetary fine exemption in our health and safety laws for public entities. In 2019, City Union of Baltimore lost one of our members, Trina Cunningham, in a workplace accident at the Patapsco water treatment facility when she fell through a faulty catwalk above a tank holding untreated sewage. This accident was not only tragic, but preventable, as the subsequent inspection of the facilities done by MOSH found numerous serious workplace safety violations at the plant, including a failure to inspect and maintain walking surfaces on the catwalks above the cascading effluent outfall, which was the direct cause of Ms. Cunningham's death.

At the closing conference between MOSH, city DPW, and the union to present MOSH's findings, it was revealed that MOSH found 24 serious safety violations at the Patapsco plant, "serious" meaning "a violation where there is a substantial probability that death or serious physical harm could result." After each of the violations listed on MOSH's report, the proposed penalty was stated as "\$0.00," meaning that despite these dozens of violations that can be a cause of death or serious injury, violations that would easily warrant a six-figure penalty, because of our broken state Occupational and Safety laws, there would be no penalty for causing the death of this city worker. I have included the MOSH closing document in my testimony, so that you can be as outraged as was to see a city employee's life's worth reduced so much.

Our support for this bill is not so that we may bankrupt public entities. Our support for this bill is simply that there must be some financial incentive to make sure our public entities are doing all they can to keep public employees safe. Public employment in Maryland is, unfortunately, a very dangerous job, and thanks to our broken Workplace Safety and Health Laws, it is not an

exaggeration to say being a public employee in Maryland in general and Baltimore in specific is one of the most dangerous jobs, unfortunately, in the country. By way of example, just in the past 10 years, there have been over 300 MOSH/OSHA violations found in city agencies, one of the worst track records in the country. We must do more to be sure our public employees are safe at work. We again call on the passage of HB 176. Thank you.