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HB 0176

March 25, 2025

TO: Members of the Senate Finance Committee

FROM: Nina Themelis, Director of Mayor's Office of Government Relations

RE: House Bill 176 - Davis Martinez Public Employee Safety and Health Act

POSITION: SUPPORT

Chair Beidle, Vice Chair Hayes, and Members of the Committee, please be advised that the Baltimore City Administration (BCA) supports House Bill (HB) 176 as amended.

HB 176 introduces significant revisions to the Maryland Occupational Safety and Health Act to strengthen protections for public sector employees, including correctional officers. The legislation establishes the Public Employees' Safety and Health Unit within the Division of Labor and Industry, led by an Assistant Commissioner, to administer oversight of workplace safety compliance. The legislation removes the previous exemption of public bodies from certain penalties, directing civil penalty revenues toward the Maryland Apprenticeship and Training Program. Furthermore, it tasks the Commissioner of Labor and Industry, in consultation with the Occupational Safety and Health Advisory Board, with adopting regulations aimed at protecting public employees from workplace violence, thereby enhancing accountability and employee safety statewide. Additionally, it requires a Correctional Training Commission to establish regulations for the training, issuance, and use of body-worn cameras and mandates that correctional units maintain written policies for their deployment.

The bill's updated standards are expected to enhance safety protocols, reducing risks for employees. The city remains committed to promoting employee safety and has made significant progress in fostering safer and healthier workplaces. Many agencies have been working to build the necessary capacity and culture to reduce workplace injuries, illnesses, and incidents of violence.

The BCA would like to recommend that penalty revenues should be directed towards health and safety measures which would ensure that collected fines are utilized effectively. Specifically, these funds could support a no-fee MOSH training program for the public sector, allowing the commissioner to allocate a portion of any fine towards abatement activities. This adjustment would strengthen the bill's effectiveness while supporting long-term workplace safety enhancements.

The BCA respectfully supports HB 176 as amended as these changes will help public agencies meet compliance requirements while prioritizing long-term workplace safety.