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Patrick Moran - President

Testimony
HB 187 – Public Institutions of Higher Education – Outbreak Response Plan
Support with Amendment

AFSCME Council 3 supports this legislation. This bill would require that public institutions of higher education as well as community colleges develop an “Outbreak Response Plan” for instances in which there is an outbreak of a life-threatening contagious disease or other health emergency. The plan would include a process for notifying students, families of students, faculty and staff about the nature of the outbreak, subpopulations that are at risk, and guidance of reasonable protective measures. It would also require that information on the availability of lab testing be shared. The plan would also include a process for implementing evidence-based outbreak response measures and the provision of staff to implement the plan. Finally, the bill would include a process for reporting the outbreak to important stakeholders.

AFSCME Council 3 represents employees at College Park where an outbreak of an adenovirus was responsible for the death of a Freshman student last year. The same virus sickened a number of students. Prior to the virus being present, the campus had been plagued with a significant mold problem in a number of dorms. While mold does not cause this virus, it can weaken an immune system and increase vulnerability to the virus.

The response of the College Park campus to the mold issue was unacceptable. When it was discovered, housekeepers were assigned to clean the mold with no training and no protective gear. After the union raised this as a problem, some protective gear was provided but training was limited. A number of employees became sick, suffering from sore throats, headaches and scratchy eyes.

AFSCME would like to suggest an amendment to this bill. We believe it is important that the union that represents the worker be notified about an outbreak as early as possible. That way we can assist in making sure employees take precautions. We can also tap the resources of our national union who has a health and safety department familiar with these types of issues.

The amendment that would require notification of the union would be on page 3 after line 9 to add:

(VI). THE UNION, IF ANY, THAT REPRESENTS EMPLOYEES ON THE CAMPUS

Thank you for your consideration of this legislation. We urge your favorable action on this bill.

Every AFSCME Maryland State and University contract guarantees a right to union representation.
An employee has the right to a union representative if requested by the employee.
800.492.1996

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