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**SB 434 - Labor and Employment - Occupational Safety and Health - Heat
Stress Standards
February 20, 2020
Senate Finance Committee
FAVORABLE**

**Testimony of Jaime Contreras, Vice President and Director, Capital Area
District, 32BJ SEIU**

Committee Chair Kelley and members of the committee. My name is Jaime Contreras, Vice President of SEIU 32BJ.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on behalf of the union's 20,000 members in Maryland and the D.C. Metropolitan Area. SEIU 32BJ represents thousands of airport workers on the East Coast. Workers at BWI are currently organizing with our union, including ground service workers exposed to high heat and humidity working outside in the Summer.

Not only do unsafe high heat conditions impact ramp and baggage handlers, but they also could harm cabin cleaners who often have to do work on airplanes without air conditioning turned on. In addition, at BWI, many of the trucks that workers drive do not have air conditioning.

This bill would also impact security officers at locations throughout the state who may not have access to water and shade, but are forced to be in the sun all day, and commercial office building cleaners who work overnight shifts buildings with the air conditioning turned off.

The State of Maryland typically records 30 days with a heat index of 90 degrees Fahrenheit or more every year. That number is expected to rise to between 63-73 days of high heat index temperatures in the near future.ⁱ

In other states, OSHA has investigated unsafe high heat conditions. For example, at Miami International Airport, OSHA issued a citation to airline contractor Eulen America concerning an unsafe heat condition. Eulen America was found to have violated OSHA's General Duty Clause which requires employers to provide a place of employment free from recognized hazards that were causing or likely to cause death or serious physical harm to employees. OSHA found that ramp and baggage handlers which engaged in heavy material handling were exposed to temperature levels that may lead to development of serious heat-related illnesses such as, but not limited to, heat cramps, heat exhaustion, heat stroke and death."

We urge you to support SB434 and direct Maryland OSHA to promulgate a heat stress rule, requiring employers to implement heat stress plans on the worksite, which includes training, paid breaks, providing water, monitoring worker exposure to heat, and maintaining records on heat injuries and precautions taken to prevent them.

ⁱUnion of Concerned Scientists (USC) 2019. USC Killer Heat Data, online <http://www.ucsusa.org/killer-heat>