



# MARYLAND STATE & D.C. AFL-CIO

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**SB 728 – Labor and Employment – Worker Safety and Health – Injury and Illness  
Prevention Program  
Senate Finance Committee  
March 17, 2021**

**SUPPORT**

**Donna S. Edwards  
President  
Maryland State and DC AFL-CIO**

Madam Chair and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of SB 728 – Labor and Employment – Worker Safety and Health – Injury and Illness Prevention Program. My name is Donna S. Edwards, and I am the President of the Maryland State and District of Columbia AFL-CIO. On behalf of the 340,000 union members in the state of Maryland, I offer the following comments.

We strongly support Health and Safety Committees, with the full participation of workers. Those who are most affected by the decisions of industry should have a seat at the table when it comes to defining a safe vs. unsafe work environment or policy. Workplace injuries are preventable, and those who can best define where the problems exist are the ones who work every day creating the value for any business: The Worker. All Workers' Compensation experts agree that this is a major tool to prevent injuries and illnesses. Workers and management, working together, makes a difference and reduces the number of OSHA citations. These Health and Safety Committees also inculcate a culture of safety in the entire business. According to the Department of Labor (DOL) companies that had workplace safety and health committees saw an improvement in their business' profitability. Workers and employers coming together to solve the problems reduces OSHA citations and increases profitability because everyone involved in the process has a vested interest in the success of the business and the workers. Fourteen other states already mandate injury and illness prevention programs, and 11 states mandate health and safety committees, including our next door neighbor, West Virginia. These are not new concepts, and they are paramount to ensuring a safer and more productive workplace.

Surveying Maryland's existing workplace safety laws and procedures reveals a dearth of good policies that, if implemented, would decrease injuries and illnesses for workers. And, in these unprecedented times, with no statewide Emergency Temporary Standard in place and a shifting landscape of State and Local Executive Orders related to COVID-19, the cracks in our workplace safety laws are fully revealed, showing the need for stronger policies to protect workers.

The decisions of these committees have no bearing on workplace safety without also requiring written illness and prevention plans that can be reviewed and measured for success. The workers and management need to be able to work together towards a safer workplace and produce written records – reviewable and reportable by MOSH – of the steps they have taken to do so, as well as their record of success with a written and executed safety plan.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), in 2019, 64,900 cases of Marylanders suffering work-related injuries, leading to a combined 25,600 missed days of work. Workplace injuries are preventable, but only if there are strong policies in place – and a coalition of workers and management striving for the same goal greater workplace safety – to mitigate these injuries and illnesses.

**We ask for a favorable report on SB 728.**