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Patrick Moran - President

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## **HB 900 - Occupational Safety and Health - Public Buildings - Indoor Air Quality**

### **POSITION: FAVORABLE**

AFSCME Council 3 supports HB 900. This legislation requires the Commissioner of Labor and Industry, by Oct. 31, 2025, to promulgate a comprehensive indoor air quality (IAQ) standard for public buildings in Maryland. HB 900 requires that the standard shall establish minimum evidence-based standards for safe building operation and levels of contaminants and pollutants. Each public employer will be required to conduct an annual assessment of the building envelopes, enclosures, and HVAC systems and involve the input of employees. Public employers will also have to certify annually that their HVAC systems have been inspected and are operating as designed. Finally, public employers will need to develop written plans to annually inspect and assess building systems and make repairs where necessary. These plans must also include trainings for employees and a method to investigate, record and respond to employee complaints regarding signs or symptoms that may be associated with building-related illness.

### **National IAQ Momentum and Federal Funding**

The time is right for Maryland to focus on indoor air quality. In 2022, the White House teamed up with the Environmental Protection Agency to issue the Clean Air in Buildings Challenge. Maryland should follow suit to guarantee the health and well-being of government employees and those they care for in densely occupied buildings like schools, long-term care facilities, juvenile institutions, prisons, etc. The Biden-Harris Administration and Congress have provided hundreds of billions of dollars in federal funds that can be used in schools and public buildings to improve indoor air quality between the American Rescue Act and Infrastructure and Inflation Reduction spending bills on energy efficient building projects. Federal OSHA also supports state-level occupational health and safety spending through matching grants.

### **But Won't HB 900 Cost the State Hundreds of Millions Annually?**

No. HB 900 requires an annual assessment and a written plan, but it has no mechanism to force remediation. Those decisions will still ultimately be left up to the public employers and policy makers as MDL has no ability to even fine public employers who aren't in compliance. Public employers and policy makers will still be able to prioritize projects. We also often leave out of these discussions the estimated savings in health care costs and increases in productivity that can be accomplished from improving indoor quality. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the important role indoor air can play in infectious disease transmission. Improvements in Indoor Air Quality can also lead to improvements in cognitive function.

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

**HB 900 is the First Step in Helping us Assess our IAQ Needs**

HB 900 helps us determine our needs for improving indoor air quality in public buildings across Maryland. It also ensures that every public employer has a plan to address indoor air quality issues and maintain healthful air quality by tracking and recording employee complaints and ensuring that these complaints can be made free of retaliation. Long-term, we believe that this occupational safety and health model is the best way to sustain a measured and reasonable approach to improving indoor air quality in all our public buildings over time.

**For these reasons, we urge the committee to provide a favorable report on HB 900.**