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HOUSE BILL 900 – Occupational Safety and Health – Public buildings – Indoor Air Quality

HB 900 requires that on or before October 31, 2025, the Maryland Occupational Safety and Health Administration (MOSH) must develop and disseminate a comprehensive indoor air quality (IAQ) standard that applies to all public employers that employ individuals who are required to work in public buildings.

Modeling the best practices in occupational safety and health, HB 900 allows employees and their exclusive bargaining representatives to collaborate and engage with their employers during an annual assessment of the building's envelopes and enclosures, ventilation and systems, and their operation and maintenance. HB 900 also requires a process for tracking and logging employee complaints of signs or symptoms from building-related illnesses.

Finally, HB 900 promotes collaboration among all relevant stakeholders by establishing a technical advisory committee composed of experts and exclusive bargaining representatives who make recommendations on the comprehensive IAQ standard and consider cost-effective solutions to bring public buildings into compliance. Committee members also consider other appropriate health standards and provide guidance.

The quality of air we breathe indoors impacts our ability to live our most productive and healthiest lives. Our experiences with COVID-19 showed how important clean indoor air is in the workplace. Studies show that transmission of the virus can be reduced by 80% with improved indoor ventilation and air filtration¹. Cleaner and healthier indoor air not only reduces the spread of COVID-19 and other airborne viruses, and it is recognized that clean air improves cognition and productivity, protects against outdoor air pollutants such as smog, and decreases the number of environmental triggers for conditions like asthma and allergies².

Marylanders visit our public buildings daily. At the MVA, in our public schools, in courthouses, on universities, and when they come to the Maryland General Assembly to testify. Hundreds of thousands of workers call our public buildings their worksites everyday also. We would never tolerate them eating dirty food in our public buildings, we shouldn't tolerate them breathing dirty air in our public buildings either.

¹ Fondazione David Hume, "Data Analysis: Controlled Mechanical Ventilation (CMV) works," March 25, 2022, available at <https://www.fondazionehume.it/data-analysis/controlled-mechanical-ventilation-cmv-works/>.

² <https://www.epa.gov/iaq-schools/reference-guide-indoor-air-quality-schools>

HB 900 takes a measured and practical approach to improving indoor air quality in public buildings. By utilizing the occupational safety and health model, we ensure that every public employer has a plan to maintain healthful indoor air quality for the public and its workers. Once enacted by the Maryland General Assembly enactment, the State of Maryland would join New Jersey and California as states that currently have IAQ regulatory standards³. Let's be a leader on indoor air quality in our public settings.

³ Occupational Safety and Health Administration, U.S. Dep't of Labor, *Indoor Air Quality*, retrieved from <https://www.osha.gov/indoor-air-quality> (last accessed 1/17/2023)