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MAJORITY WHIP

Appropriations Committee



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## THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES

### ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

#### **Testimony of Delegate Jazz Lewis on HB921 State Employees - Colleague Bereavement Leave**

Fellow Members of the Appropriations Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak on behalf of my legislation to allow our state workforce to have colleague bereavement leave when a close co-worker of theirs loses their life on the job.

HB921 sets out to ensure that no one who works in our state government is forced to work through the traumatic experience of the death of a close colleague. We shouldn't be expecting our state employees who already have tough jobs to bear the mental stress of losing a co-worker and having to immediately go back to the job in the same position that someone lost their life in. Many of our state employees already face challenging and tough jobs, they should not also have to deal with such a tragic loss. This bill is limited to those who work in close proximity to a state employee who passes away on the job, so it's likely that anyone who would be taking this leave would be doing the same job as the deceased, a situation that I think we should not accept.

This bill came about from the experiences of DPP workers in the aftermath of the tragic loss of Parole Agent Martinez last year. A beloved colleague and friend, following his death, many of his coworkers were still expected to work and were unable to grieve and mourn his loss properly. This bill would prevent future situations like this and ensure that our state employees who face the crisis of losing a close colleague are able to take the time they need to grieve and recover so they may come back afterwards ready to do the essential jobs they do on behalf of Marylanders.

**For these reasons, I ask for a favorable report.**