



Testimony - HB 921, State Employees - Colleague Bereavement Leave  
Favorable  
House Appropriations Committee  
March 4, 2025  
Terrence Cavanagh  
On Behalf of SEIU Local 500

Honorable Chairman Barnes and Members of the House Appropriations Committee:

SEIU Local 500 as one of the largest public sector labor unions representing over 23,000 workers in Maryland stand in solidarity with our union brothers and sisters among the state workforce and wish to express our strong support of House Bill 921, which would provide state employees with up to five days of paid colleague bereavement leave under specific circumstances. This bill is a necessary and compassionate step in recognizing the emotional toll of losing a close coworker, particularly when that loss occurs in the workplace.

State employees often spend as much time with their colleagues as they do with their own families. In many cases, strong personal and professional bonds are formed, making the loss of a coworker deeply impactful. House Bill 921 acknowledges the reality that grieving is not limited to family relationships and ensures that employees are granted the time they need to process such a tragedy without the added burden of exhausting other forms of paid leave.

Key provisions of this bill include:

- Granting up to five days of bereavement leave for employees who worked closely with a deceased colleague, provided the death occurred on the job.
- Ensuring that employees do not have to use their existing paid leave for this purpose.
- Applying to all branches of Maryland state government, including independent personnel systems.

This bill reflects an understanding of workplace well-being and mental health. Grief has real and measurable effects on employee productivity, morale, and overall wellness. Allowing employees time to grieve and support one another will foster a more compassionate and resilient workforce.

Thank you Delegate Lewis for leading on this issue. We respectfully urge this committee to support HB 921 and provide state employees with the necessary time to mourn their colleagues without additional stress.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Terrence Cavanagh  
On Behalf of SEIU Local 500