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**House Bill 176 – Labor and Employment – Occupational Safety and Health –
Revisions (Davis Martinez Public Employee Safety and Health Act)
Appropriations Committee
February 18, 2025**

FAVORABLE

The Baltimore Teachers Union represents over 9,000 employees of Baltimore City Public Schools, including teachers, paraprofessionals, school secretaries, counselors, librarians, clinicians, transportation aides, and school support staff. Our members are on the frontlines of public education everyday, and strive to educate, support and develop Baltimore City’s young people. Baltimore’s educators encounter some of the most challenging work environments in the state, and workplace threats to safety are a major concern of our members that affects job performance, retention, and student success, as our working conditions are students’ learning conditions. The Baltimore Teachers Union is writing in strong support of HB 176 and we request that the committee issue a favorable report.

Across Baltimore City Schools, our members encounter daily occupational and safety challenges, including mold, poor ventilation, unsafe temperatures, pests, broken windows, doors that do not lock, and unlit parking lots. In winter weather, staff frequently fall in icy parking lots. We need comprehensive plans that prevent student violence and allow educators to safely respond and keep children safe when students are hitting, kicking, biting, or destroying classrooms. Our members also report a lack of clarity and consistent safety plans for instances when students or members of the public bring weapons onto school grounds. The environmental and physical challenges educators confront don’t just affect us - our students experience these unsafe conditions as well. While we work diligently to negotiate safer conditions for staff and students, we recognize that more strategies are needed to ensure that educators and students have the safe and secure environments that allow learning to flourish.

Workplace injuries are all too common in our school system, and every week BTU members report via incident reports and clinic visits the threats to their safety. At times, it’s unclear to employees the safety procedures and processes that are in place; many schools have different procedures, resources, and training on preventing and responding to safety concerns. Clear, consistent workplace safety standards would improve employee safety and retention, and would reduce disruptions to learning. We believe that our employer should work collaboratively with employees to identify and mitigate safety risks, and that there should be clear reporting systems that gather data for continuous improvement. Employees and employers can work together to help create safer workplaces for public employees, and in education especially, safer workplaces for adults mean safer environments for students and their families.

The Baltimore Teachers Union urges the committee to issue a favorable report of House Bill 176.