



Testimony - HB 176, Labor and Employment -Occupational Safety and Health-
Revisions (Davis Martinez Public Employee Safety and Health Act)

Favorable

House Appropriations Committee

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Honorable Chairman Barnes and Members of the House Appropriations Committee:

SEIU Local 500, as one of Maryland's largest public sector unions representing over 23,000 workers, expresses our strong support for House Bill 176, the **Davis Martinez Public Employee Safety and Health Act**. This critical piece of legislation represents a significant step toward improving the safety and health of public employees across our state, and it is an essential measure that directly benefits those who serve our communities.

As we all know, public employees play an indispensable role in ensuring the smooth operation of our state's various services, from law enforcement and fire departments to public health and education. They often work in environments that are hazardous or unpredictable, and unfortunately, the risks they face can sometimes lead to injury, illness, or even death. This bill is a powerful response to those risks and embodies our collective responsibility to safeguard those who dedicate their careers to serving others.

The **Davis Martinez Public Employee Safety and Health Act** ensures that public employees are provided with the necessary protections to reduce exposure to dangerous working conditions. By strengthening safety protocols and ensuring proper reporting and accountability systems, this legislation directly addresses the critical gaps that exist in current protections for public employees.

This legislation improves public employee safety and health by:

- Establishing a Public Employee Safety and Health Unit within the Maryland Occupational Safety and Health administration (MOSH) to administer and enforce Maryland's workplace safety and health laws for public employees.
- Requiring the Commissioner of Labor to publish an annual report on various topics addressing workplace safety and health issues in Maryland's public sector including, a list of citations issued to public employers in the prior year.
- Requiring public employers to keep an accurate record of work-related deaths, injuries, and illnesses and submit this data to the Commissioner on a quarterly basis.
- Clarifying and emphasizing standards for the inspection program of public employee's workplaces which experience the most complaints or citations, including random inspections of workplaces without notice to the public employer.
- Holding public employers accountable for their workers' safety by subjecting public employers to penalties for violations of workplace safety and health laws.
- Requiring MOSH to establish a workplace violence prevention standard for all public sector workplaces in Maryland.

Moreover, the tragic deaths of Ofc. Davis Martinez and other public servants highlight the urgent need for these reforms. Their loss is a stark reminder of the inherent dangers public employees face daily, and their sacrifice should drive us to action. We owe it to the families, colleagues, and communities of those lost to ensure that the necessary protections are in place to prevent further tragedy.

By passing HB 176, we take a bold and necessary step toward improving workplace safety, reducing injuries, and demonstrating our unwavering commitment to the wellbeing of the people who are there for us when we need them most. This bill reflects our shared values of safety, equity, and respect for the individuals who work tirelessly to protect and serve our state.

We urge all members of the House to support HB 176, and we thank Delegate Solomon for his leadership on this issue. Public employees deserve our utmost respect, and it is our responsibility to ensure they have the safe and healthy work environments they need to continue their important work without fear of harm. We ask you to pass this bill out of committee with a favorable report.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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