

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

FAVORABLE

Good afternoon Chair Barnes, Vice Chair Chang, and members of the committee,

My name is Arthur Bonsu, I serve as an Executive Board member of ACE-AFSCME 2250, representing security services workers in our union, and I am testifying in strong support of the Davis Martinez Act. ACE-AFSCME 2250 represents approximately 6,000 employees throughout Prince George’s County Public Schools. Our union members make sure children arrive to and from school safely, operate and maintain the facilities of our public schools, provide security services, and do so much more.

It is an honor today to be here to testify in favor of this bill. In my security services role, I witness conduct each day that places the safety of students and staff at risk. Threats, fights, and assaults create an unsafe environment to work and learn in. Many of my members have had to take assault leave due to injuries they sustain on the job.

Last year, we experienced a horrifying incident in which a student boarded a school bus and threatened to shoot people. Thankfully, no one was injured but it could have ended in tragedy. I’d like to take a moment to explain how we could have improved that situation. Currently, bus drivers are told to communicate a code word over the radio for safety incidents like this, but we believe a more effective method is a button bus drivers can press that sends out a frequency that alerts of an emergency. Additionally, other personnel can directly monitor the inside of the bus through the video camera when this button is activated. This is an example of a measure where an employee could silently press a button to activate a warning without explicitly communicating in a dangerous situation. Moreover, they have the capacity to do this now, this wouldn’t cost money.

This is an example of how a workplace violence prevention standard could benefit everyone. A workplace violence prevention standard would make certain that workers and management collaborate to identify risks and hazards in their workplace and brainstorm ideas on how we can address those hazards. Management and workers can work together to come up with creative solutions to make our places of employment safer. Please pass this bill to help us create safer working environments for our staff. Thank you.