

**Senate Bill 26 – Labor and Employment – Occupational Safety and Health –
Revisions (Davis Martinez Public Employee Safety and Health Act)
Finance Committee
January 29, 2025**

FAVORABLE

My name is Tony Sines, I have worked as a Correctional Officer for 15 years with the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services, I am a proud member and President of AFSCME Local 898 in Western Maryland. I am writing in strong support of this legislation and asking for your support of this bill.

I have watched staffing levels drop to crazy low levels in the Maryland Correctional Facilities. I was one of the officers that conducted the post-by-post staffing analysis in 2023 in all of Maryland's Correctional facilities. We met with the department over a year ago and agreed on what post needed to be added or converted to run safe correctional facilities in Maryland. As of today 1/24/2025, the department still has not promulgated any new staffing plans which are required to operate these correctional facilities. And since the staffing analysis was conducted, we have lost a lot more staff to retirement and other more competitive employers. All the while these correctional officers are forced to work mandated double shifts several times a week and forced to work one or both of their relief days this has been going on since 2016. And the facilities we work in are falling apart due to the amount of deferred maintenance issues we have not addressed. They have mold issues, broken fire equipment, leaky roofs, security radios do not function properly to call for help, broken zone sensors and fences are falling down that are there to protect the public from the incarcerated individuals just to name a few. And while we must deal with all these things the department is not providing a safe work environment for its employees or incarcerated individuals. Staff assaults have more than doubled from the calendar year 2023 to 2024. The two correctional facilities I represent house Maryland's most dangerous offenders and there have been multiple staff assaults requiring correctional officers to be life flighted to other hospitals and almost losing their lives doing this critical job and those numbers have more than doubled in the last calendar year. We must address this issue and provide a safe environment for employees and the incarcerated individuals we house in Maryland.

It is impossible for me to sit here and list all the reasons I support this bill. This bill would show Maryland state employees that you care about their health and safety and that you are willing to support them with the things they need to conduct their jobs safely. It would help bring back a strong workforce and retain employees in Maryland.

I urge the committee to issue a favorable report of Senate Bill 26.