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**Written Testimony to the Senate Finance Committee  
SB 804 - Labor and Employment - Occupational Safety and Health -  
Revisions to Heat Stress Standards  
March 11, 2026**

**UNFAVORABLE**

Good afternoon Chair Beidle, Vice Chair Hayes, and members of the Senate Finance Committee. AFT-Maryland is the state federation for thousands of PreK-12 and higher public educators, medical doctors at the University of Maryland Medical Center, and state, county, and municipal employees throughout Maryland. On behalf of these organizations, we respectfully call for this committee to issue an unfavorable report to SB 804, the bill that would revise the state's new Heat Stress Standards meant to protect our employees from excessive heat at work.

These standards were drafted and adopted using the robust regulatory process in the state after a number of high-profile incidents where employees in Maryland fell ill, and in some cases tragically passed away, due to working in excessive heat conditions. This bill would undercut that regulatory process and undo the work of state agencies and community stakeholders in developing standards that are meant to keep Marylanders safe from excessive heat while on the job, seen most commonly in the summer months as our climate continues to warm.

Specifically, this bill would undo the requirement of employers to provide adequate rest breaks when heat indexes rise to 90 or 100 degrees, or above. This loosening of the required breaks at these extreme temperatures means any steps taken by the employer to provide any rest from working in these hot conditions is reactive, and will unfortunately lead to more employees falling ill because of working under extreme heat.

Additionally, the bill undoes the current standard regarding heat acclimatization, and allows employers to set any acclimatization period for their employees that the employer chooses. It also undoes the requirement that the employer monitor their employees regularly during this acclimatization period. As acclimatization is one of the body's best ways to manage working under hot conditions, the undoing of these provisions will again likely come at the expense of employee health and safety.

Finally, the removal of the requirement that these standards be put in place when the heat index reaches a specific level in favor of a trigger that instead ignores humidity and measures just the

dry bulb temperature ignores the reality that people face when working in our summer months— it's not just the heat that threatens our health, but the heat coupled with the humidity, preventing the body from cooling itself down, which is the risk.

For these reasons, we again respectfully call for an unfavorable report to SB 804. Thank you.