



Senate Bill 804

Labor and Employment - Occupational Safety and Health - Revisions to Heat Stress Standards

March 11, 2026

Position: **FWA**

Madame Chair and Members of the Senate Finance Committee:

The Restaurant Association of Maryland strongly supports Senate Bill 804 with the proposed amendments, and we sincerely appreciate the bill sponsor's willingness to help establish more workable standards for employers and employees. This legislation's approach to heat stress standards will provide employers with more flexibility than the current COMAR heat stress rules, while also ensuring the necessary safeguards for employees.

In the restaurant/foodservice industry, employers have long managed workers in high-heat environments, and have provided hydration, and cooling periods/rest breaks as necessary to balance worker needs with operational realities.

Working in commercial kitchens inherently exposes workers to high-heat environments. Depending on the type of restaurant, cooking equipment used, and the intensity and duration of equipment use, heat levels in work areas can be high and can also fluctuate.

For many employers in our industry, Maryland's current heat stress regulations are too prescriptive and do not provide enough flexibility for employers, particularly with regard to work/rest schedules and acclimatization. And the employee training requirements under the current regulations are unreasonable for high-turnover industries like ours.

Overall, Senate Bill 804 with the proposed amendments will be far more workable for our industry and many other employers.

For these reasons, we respectfully request a favorable report for Senate Bill 804 with the proposed amendments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Melvin R. Thompson", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Melvin R. Thompson
Senior Vice President
Government Affairs and Public Policy