

**SB 804 – Labor and Employment –
Occupational Safety and Health – Revisions to Heat Stress Standards
Finance Committee
March 11, 2026
UNFAVORABLE**

Chair Beidle, Vice Chair Hayes, members of the committee, on behalf of AFSCME Local 631, I urge you to issue an unfavorable report on Senate Bill 804. Senate Bill 804 would undermine Maryland's current heat stress standard that provides crucial protection for our members.

In Local 631 I represent over 300 workers in the MDOT. As MDOT workers, we are out in the elements every day for eight or more hours. As rising temperatures occur, our members are vastly impacted. This includes members who have fainted, felt sick, left work early to go home because they were feeling sick. Since the new heat standard has been in effect there have been better precautions in place with water and rest breaks.

After years of advocacy, Maryland's heat stress standard finally took effect in September of 2024. This standard protects workers from heat stress by requiring employers to have a written heat-related illness prevention and management plan; a required acclimatization period; rest breaks; access to drinking water and shade; high heat procedures when the heat index reaches 90 degrees Fahrenheit and 100 degrees Fahrenheit; emergency response plans; and training requirements.

SB 804 undermines protections for workers by: i) altering the threshold for heat illness protections by using dry bulb temperature rather than heat index; ii) allowing the employer to set the acclimatization period and no required monitoring; iii) providing the employer discretion to determine the work and rest schedule without minimum requirements; iv) creating an exemption from heat protections for "temporary and unanticipated heat conditions," which is not defined; and v) altering heat stress retraining requirements following an incident at the worksite.

Maryland should take pride in being the first state on the east coast to adopt indoor and outdoor heat stress protections for both private and public sector workers. Members in our union face the impact of heat stress each day on the job, and for years, they advocated with other unions for a standard that will protect them from injury or death. Maryland has only had this heat stress standard for approximately a year. We cannot roll back progress that has been made to protect workers.

On behalf of AFSCME Local 631 we urge the committee to issue an unfavorable report on SB 804. Thank you.