

Testimony for SB0804

Opposed

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

March 9, 2026

To: Honorable Chair Beidle, Vice Chair Hayes, and the members of the
Senate Finance Committee

From: Kayla Mock, Political & Legislative Director

United Food and Commercial Workers Union Local 400

Chair Beidle, Vice Chair Hayes, members of the Senate Finance Committee:

I appreciate the opportunity to share my testimony on behalf of our over 10,000 members in Maryland, who work in grocery, retail, food distribution, cannabis, and health care. Through collective bargaining, our members raise the workplace standards of wages, benefits, safety, and retirement for all workers. Union members are critical to addressing inequality and uplifting the middle class.

Many of our members are the hardworking men and women who keep Maryland's grocery stores running, ensuring families have access to fresh food and essential goods.

We are in respectful opposition to SB0804, the revisions to the heat stress standards.

Maryland currently has a strong heat standard set by the Maryland Commissioner of Labor and Industry. 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.

While we would like to see the current standards be enshrined into law, 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. Workers are the ones who must face the impact of heat stress each day on the job, and for years, they have advocated 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 made to protect workers.

We respectfully urge an unfavorable report, but look forward to working with the committee and the Maryland Department of Labor to improve heat standards for Maryland workers.