



MARYLAND STATE & D.C. AFL-CIO

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SB 804 - Labor and Employment - Occupational Safety and Health - Revisions to Heat Stress Standards

Senate Finance Committee

March 11, 2026

OPPOSE

Elizabeth Bobo

Legislative Director

Madame Chair and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in opposition to SB 804.

Maryland has already recognized the importance of protecting workers from heat-related illnesses. In 2020, the General Assembly passed HB 722, directing the Commissioner of Labor and Industry to develop comprehensive heat-stress regulations. Those regulations took effect in 2024, and we saw significant improvements in worker safety over the past summer as MOSH began implementing and enforcing them. SB 804 does not build on that progress, rather it undercuts it.

The issue of heat stress is urgent. In recent years, Maryland has experienced record-breaking temperatures, often exceeding 100 degrees Fahrenheit, with heat waves lasting longer and arriving earlier in the season. Workers in both indoor and outdoors environments are facing dangerously rising heat conditions. Comprehensive, adaptable heat-stress standards are essential to preventing heat exhaustion, heat stroke, and other life-threatening conditions.

Under the current MOSH standards, employers are required to maintain a written heat-related illness prevention and management plan; provide acclimatization periods, ensure access to drinking water and shade; implement rest breaks; adopt high-heat procedures when temperatures reach 90 or 100 degrees; maintain emergency response plans; and provide comprehensive training for employees and supervisors. SB 804 severely weakens these standards by replacing a regulatory framework with checklists that are less protective and not based on best practices.

This legislation undermines safety and protections for workers by: altering the threshold for heat illness protections by using dry bulb temperature instead of heat index; allowing the



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employer to set the acclimatization period with no required monitoring; providing the employer discretion to determine the rest schedule without minimum requirements; creating an exemption from heat protections for “temporary and unanticipated heat conditions; and altering heat stress retraining requirements following an incident at the worksite. Each of these changes moves Maryland backwards at a time when rising temperatures demand stronger protections.

For these reasons, we urge an unfavorable vote on SB 804.



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