



Senate Bill 804

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

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**

To: Finance Committee

WITH AMENDMENTS

Date: March 11, 2026

From: Karrington Anderson

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS SB 804 WITH AMENDMENTS**. This bill codifies and clarifies requirements governing workplace heat stress protections that were previously adopted through Maryland Occupational Safety and Health regulations. SB 804 requires employers, including counties, to develop heat stress prevention plans, acclimatization plans, high-heat procedures, and emergency response protocols.

Counties strongly support policies that protect the health and safety of public employees. Counties made substantial investments to comply with Maryland's Heat Stress Standards. The bill provides needed and additional statutory direction for heat stress protections. However, several provisions in SB 804 unintentionally create operational challenges without improving worker safety outcomes.

The bill requires employers to submit acclimatization plans to the Commissioner. In practice, acclimatization plans are not standardized documents. Rather, they are individualized and developed through discussions between supervisors and employees when a worker begins or returns to heat-exposed work. These plans account for factors such as the employee's recent work history, physical condition, and the specific work environment. Requiring submission of each acclimatization plan could result in hundreds of routine administrative filings without providing meaningful safety oversight. Counties believe these plans should instead be maintained by the employer and provided upon request or following a heat stress incident.

Additionally, SB 804 requires retraining of all employees immediately following a heat-related illness. The term "immediately" is vague and may create logistical challenges for jurisdictions with dispersed workforces. Counties recommend clarifying this provision to allow retraining within a reasonable timeframe and limiting the requirement to employees directly connected to the incident since all employees will receive annual training as required by this bill.

With these adjustments, SB 804 can reinforce worker protections while maintaining workable implementation for local governments. For these reasons, MACo urges a **FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS** report for SB 804 (*MACo's suggested amendments are on the next page*).

MACo's Amendments to SB 804:

***Amendment #1:** Acclimatization plans are individualized and based on specific work conditions. Requiring routine submission would create significant administrative burdens without improving safety outcomes; making plans available upon request preserves oversight while maintaining practical implementation.*

On page 6, in line 6, after "COMMISSIONER" insert "**UPON REQUEST OR FOLLOWING A HEAT STRESS INCIDENT**".

***Amendment #2:** The term "immediately" is vague and may be difficult for jurisdictions to implement retraining agency-wide. Limiting retraining to employees directly involved in the incident and providing a reasonable timeframe ensures timely corrective action without disrupting operations, since all employees will receive annual training.*

On page 10, in lines 10 and 11, strike "IMMEDIATELY" and "ANOTHER", respectively, and substitute "**EMPLOYEES DIRECTLY CONNECTED TO THE HEAT STRESS INCIDENT, INCLUDING THE AFFECTED EMPLOYEE AND RELEVANT SUPERVISORS, SHALL BE RETAINED WITHIN 15 DAYS**" and "**AN**", respectively.

***Amendment #3:** This amendment clarifies that employers may implement stronger safety protections if they choose to do so. Counties often adopt enhanced safety practices based on specific work environments, and this language preserves that flexibility.*

On page 11, in line 17, after "REQUEST" insert "**(E) NOTHING IN THIS SUBTITLE SHALL BE CONSTRUED TO PROHIBIT AN EMPLOYER FROM ADOPTING POLICIES AND PROCEDURES THAT ARE GREATER THAN WHAT THIS SUBTITLE REQUIRES.**"