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**Testimony of Keith Wrightson In Support of HB 923
Labor and Employment – Worker Safety and Health – Injury and Illness
Prevention Program Economic Matters Committee
March 2, 2021**

AFSCME, representing 50,000 employees in Maryland, strongly supports enactment of House Bill 923. This legislation will significantly improve working conditions for all workers in Maryland by requiring employers to implement injury and illness prevention programs (I2P2s).

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), there were 193,400 reported workplace injuries and illnesses in Maryland from 2017 to 2019.¹ Of these, 108,700 were considered serious incidents of worker injury that resulted in days away from work, job transfer or restriction of duties.² Serious injuries causing days away from work are a major concern in Maryland; during this three-year period, more than half (56%) of workplace injuries resulted in at least one day away from work.³

A particular area of concern is the incidence of injuries among Maryland’s state and local government workers. During 2019, state and local government workers accounted for 27% of the state’s occupational injuries and illnesses.⁴ Of the 17,400 reported among state and local government workers that year, 8,900 were classified as serious injuries and illnesses.⁵

A highly effective way for Maryland to reduce workplace accidents would be to pass this legislation and require employers to institute injury and illness prevention programs. An I2P2 is a take-charge strategy that employers can use to identify and remedy workplace hazards before they cause injuries. Thirty-four states have laws that either require or encourage such approaches,⁶ including 15 states with laws mandating I2P2s for all or some employers.⁷ Federal law does not require any employers to implement such a program.

¹ Numbers of Nonfatal Occupational Injuries and Illnesses by Industry and Case Types, Maryland, 2017-2019, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR, BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS, <https://www.bls.gov/iif/oshstate.htm#MD> (viewed on March 1, 2021).

² *Id.*

³ *Id.*

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ *Id.*

⁶ U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR, OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY & HEALTH ADMINISTRATION, INJURY AND ILLNESS PREVENTION PROGRAMS (JANUARY 2012) (viewed on March 1, 2021). <https://bit.ly/3uLV5pS>.

⁷ The 15 states are: Arkansas, California, Hawaii, Louisiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Montana, North Carolina, New Hampshire, Nevada, New York, Oregon, Utah, and Washington.

American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, AFL-CIO

I2P2s are a proven way to reduce workplace injury and illnesses. Employers that participate in an I2P2 experience dramatic decreases in workplace injuries. For example, five years after California began requiring employers to institute I2P2s, injuries and illnesses among California workers were down by 19%.⁸ In Massachusetts, firms that chose to enroll in the state's program through the workers' compensation insurance system had a 20.8 percent reduction in their workplace loss ratios⁹ in the first year.¹⁰ In addition to reducing injury and illness, I2P2s can have other benefits for employers, such as improved productivity.

I2P2s are successful when they incorporate practical elements that focus on finding all hazards in the workplace and developing a plan for preventing and controlling those. Management and worker participation and establishing a safety committee are key to ensuring that all hazards are identified so employees are not placed in harm's way. Worker training on hazard identification also must be at the forefront of any I2P2, and management must be committed to providing such training on an ongoing basis. House Bill 923 incorporates all of these elements.

⁸ U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR, OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY & HEALTH ADMINISTRATION, INJURY AND ILLNESS PREVENTION PROGRAMS (JANUARY 2012) (viewed on March 1, 2021). <https://bit.ly/3uLV5pS>.

⁹ Workplace Loss Ratio: the amount of workers' compensation claims costs divided by the amount paid in premium.

¹⁰ U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR, OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY & HEALTH ADMINISTRATION, INJURY AND ILLNESS PREVENTION PROGRAMS (JANUARY 2012) (viewed on March 1, 2021). <https://bit.ly/3uLV5pS>.