



**HB923 Labor and Employment – Worker Safety and Health – Injury and Illness
Prevention Program
Economic Matters Committee
March 5, 2021**

Position: Unfavorable

Background: HB923 would require businesses to establish an injury and illness prevention program that must meet regularly throughout the year.

Comments: The Maryland Retailers Association agrees with the importance of maintaining a safe and healthy workspace; however, the committee structure proposed by HB923 is not feasible for a retail environment.

In a normal year, the retail industry has an average turnover rate of over 60%. The need to regularly hire and train new employees would make it very difficult to fulfill the requirement to maintain a committee such as the one proposed in the bill. Additionally, an employer would need to ensure that all committee members are able to work the same schedule shifts in order to plan regular meetings. This can be difficult to manage as one of the appeals of a retail position is the ability to work a schedule outside of the typical 9-5 window based on an employee's lifestyle needs – there is no guarantee that the employees chosen for the proposed committee would always be available for the same block of time. As for the multitude of issues that committee members would be required to discuss and report on, most retail workers are not qualified to evaluate safety and health standards in a place of work.

In addition to the myriad of difficulties posed by the mandate to form and maintain a health and safety committee that must fulfill all of the duties described in the bill, the requirement to develop an injury and illness prevention program is burdensome to businesses. Business owners and managers are not health and safety experts. We would welcome Maryland Occupational Safety and Health to provide a template program for businesses to follow, but business owners are not qualified to independently develop a plan like that described in HB923.

We again recognize the importance of maintaining a healthy workforce and providing a safe workplace, and we appreciate the intent behind this bill. Ultimately we do not believe that the proposals in HB923 would effectively address what it proposes, due to the issues presented by the nature of scheduling and administrative duties in the retail industry.