Friends and Members,

Thank you for coming to support your fellow workers. My name is Jerry Smith and I am the President of the Maryland Professional Employees Council, AFT Local 6197 AFL-CIO.

We are here because the Maryland Department of Assessments and Taxation chose to implement a sick leave policy that would require employees to disclose personal medical information to use earned sick leave. Not only would our members be required to disclose the information to their supervisor, but they could be required to disclose this information to any person their immediate supervisor designated to receive sick leave call. The sick leave policy was implemented with the intent to make it harder for employees to use sick leave; to make it harder for parents to care for their sick children, to make it harder for people to care for themselves.

We are here because your colleagues decided to take a stand against this illegal policy. When the agency implemented the policy, there was outrage and they quickly moved to cover their tracks. The agency insisted that the policy was rescinded to negotiate with the union, but we are all the Union and there is nothing in the policy to negotiate. The Maryland Professional Employees Council is here to protect the rights of employees. The sick leave policy implemented by the Department of Assessments and Taxation demonstrates the agency’s fundamental misunderstanding and misapplication of both state and federal law, and demonstrates a belief by the Director’s office that they are entitled to violate employees’ fundamental privacy rights.

We are here to reinforce our demand for Respect and Dignity in the workplace. We have seen the slow erosion of these values. The Department of Assessments and Taxation has not given us a substantive response when we raised our concerns about the sick leave policy. Therefore, we are calling on the Attorney General to investigate this agency and answer the question “How does an invasive and illegal sick leave policy get pass the HR Director, Asst. Attorney General, and Agency Director”. We hope that the answers to that question will prevent future incidents with other agencies, because we refuse to let our government continue on a path that lacks empathy and compassion for the needs of families and workers.

We know that on May 25th Gov. Hogan took sick leave away from 700,000 people when he vetoed the paid sick-leave bill, and on June 7th SDAT demonstrated that this government is attempting to bully people into not using their earned sick leave. MPEC will not stand idle while sick leave and families are attacked. We call on Gov. Hogan and Michael Higgs to treat individuals and families with Respect and Dignity.

We Demand Respect.