



**Written Statement of the Amalgamated Transit Union
International President Lawrence J. Hanley
LABOR & INDUSTRY
Public hearing on HB 1082 - Protect workplace safety**

The early 20th Century labor activist, Mother Jones, once famously said, 'Pray for the dead, and fight like hell for the living.' Workers met untimely deaths in her day for a variety of reasons. They would be killed trying to organize labor unions; they could die because they had no access to health care, and they could lose their lives due to unsafe working conditions.

Conditions have improved since passage of the Occupational Safety and Health Act in 1970, but Pennsylvania public employees do not have the same safe workplace protection as provided to private employees.

In 2014, Erie Metropolitan Transit Authority (EMTA) bus mechanic Jake Schwab, a member of Amalgamated Transit Union Local 568, died when a bus airbag he was working on exploded in his face. Jake was working with the wrong equipment on a bus from another agency. In fact, because Jake was a public employee no federal or state agency had jurisdiction to investigate his death. Instead, EMTA's private insurance company did the investigation and as of today they have yet to release their findings. Furthermore, there had been no safety training in Jake's garage for over nine years.

This is unacceptable. Jake was like the thousands of sanitation workers, bus mechanics, prison workers and other dedicated Pennsylvania public employees who work hard each day to make Pennsylvania the great state it is. These workers deserve to be safe on the job and make it home to their family each night.

The deafening silence coming from Pennsylvania lawmakers about Jake Schwab's death speaks volumes about the disregard and lack of concern they have for workers

It's time for Pennsylvania lawmakers to fulfill the promise OSHA made more than 40 years ago to provide all workers safety on the job. Don't let Jake Schwab's death go unanswered.