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—
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Chair, Oversight Committee on Pensions

Public Safety and
Administration Subcommittee

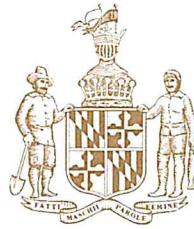
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Joint Audit Committee

House Chair

Joint Committee on Cybersecurity,
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Joint Committee on Fair Practices
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Joint Committee on Pensions



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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

HB 60 –Local Pensions—Special Disability Retirement Allowance

January 28, 2020

Sponsor Testimony

Chairwoman McIntosh, and Honorable members of the House Appropriations Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to present *HB 60 –Local Pensions—Special Disability Retirement Allowance*. If enacted HB 60 would establish that local pension plans provide law enforcement officers a 45% disability retirement pension following a line of duty injury, if they are no longer able to work.

Background:

In December 2019, Officer Jason Easton of the Aberdeen Police Department was shot in the face and eye while on duty investigating a citizen's call. Officer Easton recovered, but not to the extent where he could resume daily police duties following a review by the Aberdeen Police Department. He took early retirement on disability, because he had no choice, then quickly discovered that Aberdeen's disability pension was much lower as a percentage of a police officer's wages than many other departments. This is not a unique case to Aberdeen, and is found in many smaller departments throughout the state.

Why is this bill needed?

Currently there is no standard regulation in the matter of injured officer disability pensions. Each police agency makes the decisions on disability retirement. A significantly larger agency can provide an ample pension, while officers working in smaller agencies are typically afforded a smaller pension package.

Injured officers and their families should not have to worry about a serious financial hit at such a difficult time based on the size of the agency and community they serve. Maryland has multi-jurisdiction response protocol for response so in the event that law enforcement officers from different jurisdictions respond to the same incident and sustain similar injuries, one may receive a full disability benefits package while the other officer may receive nothing. This bill would eliminate that concern.

There is no justification for not treating every man and woman, who takes an oath to serve and protect their fellow citizens equally. Each officer who is injured in the line of duty should have uniform financial protections, no matter where they serve. It is with this justification that I respectfully request a favorable report on HB 60.