

February 11, 2020

The Honorable Maggie McIntosh  
Chair, Appropriations Committee  
121 House Office Building  
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Chair McIntosh and Appropriations Committee Members,

My name is Linda Murray. I am here in support of HB 537. I'd like to thank Delegate Saab for sponsoring this proposal and being here with me today as my representative. I have been a resident of Anne Arundel County for 42 years. I am currently employed at the University of Maryland School of Nursing as a nursing faculty member. Previously I was employed as Assistant Director of the Nursing Program at Anne Arundel Community College for 11 years from 2002 to 2013.

While employed at AACC, I contributed to the Maryland State Retirement and Pension System Optional Retirement Plan (ORP).

In 2013 I was recruited for a full time faculty position at UMB. Prior to making a decision as to accepting the position, I contacted UMSON Human Resources with an important question to determine if my enrollment in the ORP while at AACC would be considered continuous at UMB as I knew this would impact my retiree health benefits.

This was a concern to be addressed before accepting the position as having worked 11 years at AACC was vested and eligible for partial health benefits if I retired. Additionally I was tenured with rank of Associate Professor and was only being offered at UMB a rank of Clinical Instructor until I completed my doctorate. I also would not be able to be tenured at UMB according to policy.

On October 16, 2013, I received an email from Sandra Jones, Benefits Specialist, Human Resources, UMB, stating that my ORP service would be combined and that before I would retire and receive health care benefits I would need to have AACC complete a length of service form.

In September 2018, I visited UMB HR to review my benefits situation as I was nearing retirement age. I was informed that I only had 5 years of service and that I was considered an employee that had been hired after 2011. This 2011 date is important as this is when changes were made to the retiree health benefits for the state of Maryland based on an employee's initial date of employment.

I questioned this since my service was to be counted from 2002 through 2018, per the email from Sandra Jones which would be 16 years of service and I had been told my service would be combined so my hire date was actually prior to 2011 since I began working at AACC in 2002.

I requested further clarification from Emily, Benefits Manager who then directed me to Anne Timmons at the Office of Budget and Management. Emily did also provide me with a document signed by all the community college presidents and the UM system president that indicated the ORP was the same plan for all the institutions.

Ms. Timmons responded to my concerns in January 2019 stating my service was not continuous per their office and I would need to work 10 years at UMB to be even eligible for retirement and to be eligible for partial subsidized retiree health benefits for they considered I was hired after 2011.

I questioned this with a subsequent email to Ms Timmons as I could not find a state regulation that supported her information and I had in hand my initial email from Sandra Jones stating that the service would be combined. There was no further response at the time.

I continued meeting with various Human Resources representatives, Counsel and Vice Presidents at UMB to try and determine my best course of action. It was decided that a legislative fix could possibly address my situation. That is why I am before you today. I have directly served Anne Arundel County citizens in my role as a Pediatric Nurse Practitioner and faculty member for over 20 years and I have served the citizens of Maryland in my role as a faculty member at both AACC and UMB and as a PNP for over 25 years.

As a constituent the only time I have come to the legislature is to ask for assistance and support in assisting children and families in the state of Maryland never for a personal issue. I am hoping you can support HB 537 so that my situation may be clarified.

Thank you for your consideration. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

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