

House Bill 356

State Retirees Prescription Plan

March 12,2025

Mr. Chairman and distinguished committee members, I am Donald McCord, a retired Lieutenant with the Maryland State Police. I am testifying on behalf of the Maryland State Police Alumni Association and Maryland Troopers Association in support of HB 356. I have been intimately involved assisting retired Troopers, their surviving spouses and our civilian staff, transition to the new Medicare Part D plan. For many retirees, this was a very complicated and time consuming process that was filled with great anxiety and angst. Based on what I have witnessed thus far, I don't envision the future being any better for Medicare eligible retirees anytime in the near or distant future.

We are now more than two months into the operational phase of the new Medicare Part D program. As one can imagine, the early results have been mixed. Due to the diverse and complex nature of healthcare, many retirees are struggling with this transition. Premiums have more than doubled for many retirees based on the vendor selected to provide prescriptive services. A significant number of retirees have found themselves having to either change long standing prescriptions, whose efficacy has been tried and true, to being forced by insurance companies to revert back to medicines that are ineffective. This has resulted in the retiree having to repeat a process they have already gone through once, to get back to the medication that helps them the most. In other words, it forces them to take a step backwards and repeat a process of feeling bad for an extended period of time while they prove the efficacy of their original medications to the new insurance carrier.

Some retirees have been faced with tremendous out of pocket expenses due to none of the vendors selected to participate in the State Medicare Part D program, or offering minimal coverage of prescribed medications that were covered before

this transition. Other retirees have been faced with insurance companies forcing them to change medications simply because of the price of their current medication, even though the drug was offered on the posted formulary when the retiree enrolled. A classic bait and switch.

Another issue identified, involved the reimbursement funds provided for by the State of Maryland to retirees retiring before January 1, 2020. One retiree in particular, had nearly 50 years of State service and was found to be ineligible for her reimbursement funds, because she retired in December 2020 instead of December 2019. It turned out she was unaware of the retirement deadline. And, while attempting to maximize her Social Security benefits, due to being widowed and losing her spouse's benefit, she inadvertently lost her State benefit.

While no system is perfect, history has taught us there is strength in numbers, especially when buying a product or service. Forcing vulnerable retirees, who struggle to understand a very complex industry such as healthcare, to buy their own prescription coverage in an open market, defeats this principle and has left retirees vulnerable, and devalues the sacrifices they have made on behalf of the State of Maryland. Our retirement years should be ones that have us enjoying the fruits of our labor and sacrifices over the years. Not worrying about how we are going to survive and pay the ever increasing costs of services for an industry which we have little understanding, or control over. I would encourage this committee to issue a favorable vote for this bill or recommend an independent committee be formed to study the impact of the State's transition to Medicare Part D as it stands now. This transition has placed an undue financial burden on many of our retirees and deserves reconsideration.

Donald McCord 410-925-8844

djmccord@comcast.net