

TESTIMONY FOR HOUSE BILL 356

By Marilyn Miller, President Maryland Classified Employees

Association

House Appropriations Committee

Favorable

Good afternoon Mr. Chair and Members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Marilyn Miller, President, Maryland Classified Employees Association, AFT Local 1935.

MCEA represents approximately 1,100 retirees and approximately 300 active members with 30+ years of service to the State of Maryland. I am here to testify for a favorable report House Bill 356, the bill that will restore our prescription benefits that were promised to us when we decided to join the State of Maryland workforce. For most of us, that was the deciding factor in working 30+ years to secure those benefits in our senior years.

If this bill is not passed, it will most definitely decide which retirees will survive and which ones have their days numbered. Most of our retirees are over the age of 80 and require life sustaining medications. Below are a few of the comments I have received since the retirees have been enrolled in a MEDICARE Part D plan:

“My husband worked for the State for 41 years. He retired November 30, 2020, so we are not eligible for the spending card to help with the prescription prices. When we compared plans, my insulin was \$54 but when I picked up my prescription, it was \$105. When I called VIA they said the price of prescriptions are rising. VIA listed my blood thinner at \$388 for a 90-day supply, but when I went to pick it up, the cost was \$733.69.”

“I recently went to get an ointment prescribed for me that normally costs me \$21, now costs me \$300 due to our new VIA insurance plan.”

“I have a prescription for eye drops for dry eye. The generic 60 day supply last year cost me \$50. This year the generic 60-day supply cost me \$171. My other prescription for a 90-day supply cost me \$50 last year. This year the 90-day supply cost me \$711.”

For myself, the plans VIA has offered do not cover 3 of my medications and for my psoriatic arthritis medication it is not on their formulary so my co-pay per month is \$1,995. My medications cannot have a side effect of pancreatitis, and this is the only medication without that side effect. So, I am very limited on what medications can be prescribed for me.

It should be noted that the average retirement income for retirees is \$1,500 a month or \$18,000 per year before taxes, medical insurance and now new prescription deductions. I personally do not like the fact that I have to decide between food, a roof over my head, and medications. This is a true travesty for State retirees. It is amazing that you depend on us to keep the government open but unwilling to honor the implied contract we had when we signed our paperwork to be a member of the state work force.

Please vote FOR this bill to show the State Retirees and the Active State Employees with 30+ years of service, that their blood, sweat and tears for the years they were loyal to the State of Maryland have not been thrown out like an old newspaper.

Thank you for your time. Have a good day.

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