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Patrick Moran – President

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**SB 491 – Military Service Credit – Eligibility**  
**Budget and Tax Committee**  
**February 19, 2025**

**Position: FAVORABLE**

AFSCME Council 3 supports Senate Bill 491, which removes the prohibition against allowing military service credit for state employees who are active-duty retirees and are part of the Law Enforcement Officers' Pension System (LEOPS). This legislation is vital for both fairness and addressing critical staffing shortages.

**Recruitment: Addressing Staffing Shortages**

The state has faced difficulties in recruiting enough Helicopter pilots in the Aviation Commend in the Maryland State Police. One of the most promising solutions to these staffing shortages is to recruit former military personnel. These individuals already possess the skills and experience necessary for success in highly structured, mission-critical environments. Military service instills discipline, adherence to protocols, and a strong sense of order, all of which are directly transferable to the demands of their work.

**Fairness: Ensuring Equal Benefits for Military Retirees**

This bill addresses a fairness issue in our retirement systems. Currently, individuals who retire from the National Guard or the Reserves can already receive service credit for their military service when they join state retirement systems like LEOPS. However, active-duty military retirees do not receive this same benefit. Senate Bill 491 would correct this disparity, ensuring that individuals who serve in different branches of the military are treated equitably. This is particularly important when two employees, one a National Guard or Reserves retiree, and the other a retired active-duty military service member, work side-by-side but receive different retirement benefits for comparable service. Equalizing these benefits will enhance fairness and morale among state employees.

**Skills and Experience: Enhancing the Workforce**

Beyond fairness, this legislation offers a clear incentive for military retirees to consider careers in state service.

Military veterans bring invaluable skills to the table that are urgently needed. These individuals often have extensive leadership experience, security training, crisis management expertise, and the resilience necessary to thrive in high-pressure environments. By offering military service credit, the state can attract skilled personnel who are ready to contribute immediately, helping to fill critical vacancies and improve the overall performance of our workforce.

## **Supporting Staffing Needs and Equity**

In conclusion, Senate Bill 491 not only ensures fairness by providing equity among military retirees but also serves as a strategic response to the ongoing staffing shortages in key state agencies. By incentivizing military veterans to join the workforce, this legislation will help address these critical shortages while bringing much-needed skills and experience to vital public safety roles.

We urge you to provide a favorable report on Senate Bill 491. This bill is a crucial step in building a stronger, more effective workforce and ensuring that those who have served our country are treated fairly in their pursuit of meaningful careers in state service.

