



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**Testimony in Support of HB347**  
Testimony by Delegate Andrew Pruski  
March 11<sup>th</sup>, 2026 - Economic Matters

**What the Bill Does:**

HB347 Workers' Compensation - Occupational Disease Presumptions – Hypertension expands a workers' compensation occupational disease presumption for specified public safety employees (generally firefighters) who have hypertension by establishing that an employee has demonstrated disablement from the hypertension (which is generally required to receive compensation benefits), if certain requirements are met, including having been prescribed medication to treat hypertension for at least 90 consecutive days. The bill provides that if a covered individual, such as a firefighter, rescue squad member, advanced life support unit member, or members of the Office of the State Fire Marshal, is diagnosed with hypertension, has taken prescribed medication for it for at least ninety consecutive days, and has completed at least two years of service, their condition is presumed to be work-related and compensable. Our firefighters do not miss work, or in some circumstances, not enough work due to hypertension thus causing their workers' compensation claims related to hypertension to be denied. This bill helps close the loophole created by advances in hypertension medication and screening and will help ensure that firefighters and other first responders will be able to access the care they need through workers' comp.

**Why the Bill is Important:**

HB347 is significant because it removes the difficult legal burden first responders face when trying to prove that high blood pressure was caused by their high-stress careers. Under standard law, hypertension is often dismissed as a personal health issue related to age or diet, but this bill creates a legal "presumption" that the condition is an occupational disease for firefighters and rescue workers. This shift is vital as it not only recognizes that the extreme adrenaline spikes and environmental toxins inherent in their work can be the cause of their cardiovascular damage. It makes it easier for them to access disability benefits and medical coverage as well.

This bill establishes that certain firefighters and other first responders are presumed to have an occupational disease suffered in the line of duty, *and are presumed to be disabled*, if the individual:

- Has been diagnosed with hypertension
- Has been prescribed medication to treat hypertension for at least 90 days

- Has served in their role for at least 2 years
- Are still serving at the time their claim is filed

The presumption of disability is a critical component of the bill because what we are seeing is that Commissioners in workers' compensation hearings are determining that because some first responders are not missing work, or not missing enough work, they are not partially or totally disabled, which is a requirement for the hypertension presumption under current law.

**In support of our firefighters and first responders, I request a favorable report on HB347.**