

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2008 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

House Bill 1015
Economic Matters

(Prince George's County Delegation)

Finance

Workers' Compensation - Prince George's County Correctional Officers
PG 328-08

This bill makes Prince George's County correctional officers eligible for enhanced workers' compensation benefits for permanent partial disabilities. Correctional officers who are awarded claims of fewer than 75 weeks would instead be compensated at the rate for awards of 75 to 250 weeks. Prince George's County must pay a correctional officer two-thirds of the correctional officer's average weekly wage, not to exceed one-third of the State average weekly wage.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: None.

Local Effect: Prince George's County expenditures could increase by an average of \$57,000 annually, as the county is self-insured for workers' compensation. County revenues would not be affected.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law: Certain public safety employees, including specified volunteer and paid firefighters, paramedics, and police officers, are entitled to receive enhanced workers' compensation benefits for permanent partial disabilities of fewer than 75 weeks. A public safety employee who qualifies for the enhancement is entitled to two-thirds of his

or her average weekly wage, not to exceed one-third of the State average weekly wage. The current State average weekly wage is \$877.

Background: Chapter 434 of 2007 made Montgomery County correctional officers eligible for enhanced workers' compensation benefits for permanent partial disabilities of fewer than 75 weeks.

Both Montgomery and Prince George's county correctional officers are included in the occupational disease presumption provisions of the worker's compensation law for officers suffering from heart disease or hypertension resulting in partial to total disability or death. These correctional officers have to provide a baseline medical report of existing heart disease or hypertension. The officer is entitled to the presumption only if the severity of the condition exceeds that reported in the baseline medical evaluation.

Local Expenditures: This bill would make Prince George's County correctional officers eligible for enhanced workers' compensation benefits for permanent partial disabilities of fewer than 75 weeks. This change would be consistent with treatment of Prince George's County deputy sheriffs, who are eligible for the presumption of occupational disease and qualify for enhanced benefits for permanent partial disabilities of fewer than 75 weeks.

Prince George's County advises that the bill would make an additional 426 correctional officers eligible for enhanced permanent partial disability benefits. An estimated 12 permanent partial disability claims are filed each year by these correctional officers. Prince George's County estimates that expenditures could increase by an average \$57,000 a year over the next five years if the bill is enacted, which accounts for the value of the enhanced benefits and the potential increase in the number of claims filed.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Injured Workers' Insurance Fund, National Council on Compensation Insurance, Prince George's County, Workers' Compensation Commission, Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - February 19, 2008
ncs/ljm

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