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Patrick Moran - President

Testimony
HB 1525 – Maryland Department of Health and Motor Vehicle Administration –
Medical, Nursing, and Security Personnel
Support

AFSCME Council 3 supports HB 1525. This legislation would fix pay inequities necessary for aiding recruitment and retention efforts for medical, nursing, and security positions within the Maryland Department of Health (MDH). These positions play a vital role in patient care and staff security in our state hospitals, under challenging work environments.

Security Attendants at Clifton T. Perkins must be certified by the Correctional Training Commission as Correctional Officers. They must also complete MDH training on the Prevention and Management of Aggressive Behaviors. This unique classification is really a model in terms of the training security and law enforcement personnel should receive who work with the mentally ill and/or developmentally disabled population. For many years, security attendants at Perkins were compensated at the same rate of corrections officers. About 10 years ago, an administrative error caused the Perkins security attendants fall behind Corrections officers by one grade. In 2018, with help from the General Assembly, the MDH finally corrected this error and brought security attendants back up to the level of corrections officers. Last year however, when the Department of Corrections extended a 4% raise to Corrections Officer, Perkins security attendants were once again left off and are now behind their counterparts in Corrections again.

In the last 4 years, we've had two major patient riots in state hospitals who do not have corrections trained security attendants. Staff at that hospital were barricaded while they waited for the state police to come and quell the riot. Perkins has never had a riot, in large part because they have corrections trained security who are specifically trained in riot control and contraband detection.

This legislation is not only fair, but it helps keep the patients and staff out our state hospitals safe. We urge the committee to provide a favorable report on HB 1525.

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