



MARYLAND PROFESSIONAL EMPLOYEES COUNCIL

AFT. AFL-CIO Local 6197

**Written Testimony Submitted for the Record to the Maryland State Senate
Before the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee
Testimony of Sean Stinnett, member, Maryland Professional Employees Council
AFT Local 6197
February 20, 2020
SB 884 – State Prescription Drug Benefits – Retiree Benefits - Revisions**

SUPPORT

Good morning Mr. Chair and members of the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee. My name is Stinnett and I am an employee for the state of Maryland, working in the Department of General Services. I am also a member of the Maryland Professional Employees Council, AFT Local 6197, representing the over 5000 professional employees who work for the state of Maryland. On behalf of those state employees, and MPEC's president Jerry Smith, we ask for a favorable report to SB 884, the bill that would offer state workers clarity as to who will be eligible for the new state employee retiree prescription drug benefit.

Mr. Chair and members of the committee: no one who decides to spend their careers in the service of our state does so with the idea that they will become rich. We love our state and we do feel a sense of community when we are able to bring important services to the residents of Maryland in order to make our state the best it can be. We do hope that we as state workers will be compensated fairly, and at an appropriate level based on our expertise, experience, and level of training. When the time comes for us to retire, we expect that our employer, who has benefitted so greatly by the many years of service we have given Maryland, will in turn follow-through on its commitment to do right by its retirees in the form of a stable, steady, defined income, coupled with helping us handle the costs of our health care and prescription drugs.

This bill, SB 884, will grant state retirees clarity when it is time for those retirees to ask themselves when it is the best time to retire. Unfortunately, under current law, there is much confusion about who will be eligible for the new retiree prescription drug benefit. The Department of Budget and Management has issued, stemming from this law you all passed last session, confusing guidelines to current state workers about precisely when those retirees need to be off active payroll. As a result, state employees who are considering retirement, must make life-altering decisions—namely, how much per month they can reasonably expect to pay in prescription drugs—based on confusing, unclear, or perhaps even incorrect, data.

Because this bill spells out that this program will be implemented on the second open-enrollment period following the resolution of the Fitch v. State of Maryland court case, if the state prevails, DBM will have much more time to plan and clarify the eligibility requirements for this benefit, and state employees thinking about retirement will have more time to consider their expected costs once they have left their position in service for the state. It is for these reasons, MPEC calls for a favorable report to SB 884. Thank you.

