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SB 283 Ethics & Accountability in Government Act

**Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Matters
February 20, 2020**

Ali Keane, Governor's Legislative Office

This legislation will strengthen and toughen the state ethics laws in an effort to help restore the public's trust and bring further transparency, accountability, and honesty.

A summary of the bill's provisions includes:

Tougher Penalties for Bribery

- This legislation will expand the penalties for bribery of a public officer by 1,000%, ranging from a minimum of \$10,000 and a maximum of \$100,000. These penalties will apply both to those who bribe or attempt to bribe a public official and to those who demand or receive a reward to influence the performance of their duties.

Pension Forfeiture for Convicted Lawmakers

- The legislation will codify in statute that members of the General Assembly and state employees who are found guilty, plead guilty, or enter a plea of nolo contendere for a qualifying crime committed in the course of their duties are subject to total forfeiture of their pension benefits. This expands a provision the General Assembly passed in 2016 for the state's constitutional officers.

Expanded Prohibitions on Misuse of Confidential Information

- The legislation will expand prohibitions on misuse of confidential information by current state officials and employees to include the misuse of confidential information acquired during state service by former officials and employees.

Stronger Authority for Ethics Commission to Impose Penalties

- The legislation will expand the Ethics Commission's current authority to impose a fine up to \$5,000 for each violation of the Public Ethics Law by a regulated lobbyist. The expansion will allow the Commission to assess \$5,000 fines for State employees, without having to go through a court to assess the fine.

