



190 West Ostend St., #201
Baltimore, MD 21230
Phone: 410.547.1515
Fax: 410.837.5436

Patrick Moran - President

Testimony
SB 409 – State Retirement and Pension System – COVID–19–Related Death
Benefits – Sunset Extension
Appropriations
March 22, 2022
Support

AFSCME Council 3 strongly supports SB 409. This legislation would extend the dates used to determine eligibility of members of the State Retirement and Pension System for “line-of-duty” death benefits when COVID-19 caused or contributed to the death of a member, and require the Board of Trustees for the State Retirement and Pension System to accept the death of a member as arising out of or in the course of the actual performance of duty.

Unfortunately, here we are a year later, advocating an extension of a law we all wish never had to be proposed. At AFSCME Council 3 we have talked with the survivors of this terrible pandemic. They are crushed by their loss, yet thankful that the State recognizes their loss, however incomplete that recognition is, in a manner that gives them a small ray of hope that life can move forward.

The extension of this clarification of benefit eligibility is needed and appreciated. And we applaud the Joint Committee on Pensions for this legislative undertaking and encourage the committee to continue its vigilance. The long-term effects of COVID-19 are still being discovered, and AFSCME Council 3 is advocating for a study of the impact that “long COVID” is having on the State’s workforce. We believe a robust examination of these impacts will inform future policy discussions and actions in the years ahead.

We thank you, and strongly urge a favorable report of SB 409.

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An employee has the right to a union representative if requested by the employee.
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