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Calvert and St. Mary's Counties

Judicial Proceedings Committee



THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
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Senate Bill 673 – Natural Resources Police Force – Employees – Authority of Secretary

Dear Chairman Smith and Members of the Committee,

I am writing to introduce Senate Bill 673 – Natural Resources Police Force – Employees – Authority of Secretary. This bill would allow the Natural Resources Police force (NRP) to be governed and managed similarly to how all other statewide police forces operate in Maryland.

The concept for Senate Bill 673 was requested by members of the NRP and resolves an inconsistency in State law. To my knowledge, the NRP is the last statewide law enforcement agency where the Secretary of the department is not given this authority over the management of their police force. In 2020, this Committee and the full General Assembly passed similar legislation to give the Secretary of General Services the same authority over their Department's police force. This language is similar to the provisions of law that govern the Maryland State Police.

During the drafting of this bill, I was approached by members of the Black Officers' Association (BOA) of the NRP, who raised the issue that the NRP's promotion practices were not reflective of the demographics of the State. The figures that they provided were appalling and I understand and share their frustration. I have been in communication with the BOA, as well as the State Law Enforcement Officers Labor Alliance (SLEOLA), the Fraternal Order of Police, and the Department of Natural Resources, to offer amendments for this bill that in an effort to respond to concerns shared by all stakeholders.

The amendment that I am submitting with this bill is intended to address this issue. It would require the Secretary to develop a hiring and promotion plan to ensure the NRP reflects the demographics of the State to the extent possible by October 1, and changes the effective date to July 1 to ensure the Department can address this as soon as possible. It is my belief that these added provisions and the bill as introduced hold the Secretary and the Superintendent accountable while giving the Department the flexibility it needs to implement such a plan. The amendment also restores and conforms existing provisions regarding officers of the State Forest and Park Service which were inadvertently removed, removes a provision in the bill requiring each appointee of the NRP to be a State resident on the date of their appointment, and permits the Secretary to spend up to \$100,000 to carry out a requirement to advertise open positions to underrepresented communities.

Having served for 30 years as a member of the NRP, I know how important this agency is to our State and how critical it is that we address these issues as quickly as possible. I respectfully request a favorable report with amendments on Senate Bill 673. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. Bailey".

Senator Jack Bailey