

HB285

Property Tax Credit - Disabled Law Enforcement Officers and Rescue Workers - Federal Police and Criminal Investigators

Testimony of Mark Cicero - In Support

February 1, 2022

Chair Atterbeary, Vice-Chair Washington, and members of the Ways and Means Committee,

For the record, my name is Mark Cicero and I am a disabled Federal Agent living in Maryland. I grew up in Cape St Claire and attended St. Mary's for 12 years. Upon graduation from college and graduate school, I started working for the US Government in various positions, moving my way up the ladder from Quality Assurance Specialist, Contract Specialist, and finally Federal Agent. I was injured on 02/02/2010 and required 3 back surgeries over a period of 2 years to try and eliminate the pain from my injury. While these surgeries were mildly successful I still had pain and was labeled "disabled" and unable to work. I eventually made my way back home to get the support of family after getting divorced and gaining primary custody of my son. Since my return to Maryland I have been active in many volunteer activities to include but not limited to Friends of the Lighthouse Board, Wellness House, Cub Scouts etc....

While hearing of other states having laws on the books that allow disabled law enforcement to be exempt from county property tax I was surprised that while MD does allow local/county law enforcement to be exempt from county property taxes it does not allow this for Federal Agents. While military retirees with disability (even 100%) are able to start a new career and their new salary just supplements their retirement/disability retirement, Federal Agents are the complete opposite.

Once a Federal Agent is labeled as disabled, we are given a portion of our salary when we were working. If an agent was making \$50,000 while working, we now make \$37,500. If we are able to get clearance from a doctor to start working (in any field) we would then get that amount deducted from our salary for the rest of our lives regardless if we continued working or not. For example, if I wanted to work as a substitute teacher and say I make \$7,500 a year doing this then I would make \$30,000 a year for the rest of my life even if I decided not to work as a substitute teacher ever again for whatever the reason as the government's position is that I have proven I can make \$7,500 a year.

Due to our geographic location, Maryland is home to many federal agents who have been injured in the line of duty, like myself. This tax benefit would provide financial relief for those that have been injured while serving our country.

For these reasons and the fact that these men and women have put their lives at risk just like local law enforcement, I believe we should receive the same benefits/tax breaks they are entitled to in MD.