

February 27, 2024

Senate Bill 349 and House Bill 670

I am a registered nurse who worked 30 years for the state of MD and I am writing to request support of the house bills to reinstate our prescription drug plan. If the prescription drug plan is not reinstated I will have to pay \$8000.00 dollars out of pocket before the state of MD would assist with prescriptions. That is 1/3rd of my retirement and I can only image 50% or more of those who made less than I did. I was a dedicated state employee through the COVID pandemic, shelters for disasters, furloughs we experienced, years of a lack of salary increases and most of my state career was grossly underpaid in compassion to nurses working in the private sector. One reason I stayed committed was because even though I was making much less I would have good benefits in retirement when I would MOST need them. Now that I am in my sixties and when I will need better prescription coverage it had been taken from me. What is even more outrageous is that funds continued to be spent on undocumented immigrants who paid nothing into the system and came to this country illegally. Maryland state funds should first be used to provide services to those who work tirelessly for them and are actual citizens of this county and if money is left care given to foreigners. The priorities of this state are backwards.

This is no different than you being hired to paint a house and the conditions of payment agreed upon but after the house is completed you say "sorry" I am not going to pay you what we agreed upon but significantly less. If those benefits were going to be taken away it should not be from vested employees but those who can decide if they want to work for far less wages for subpar benefits.

I was an RN for 40 years, the director of nursing for a local health department, and have a Master's degree and my salary barely was over \$100,000 when I retired in 2023. The average salary in Maryland for an RN with an MSN is \$151,000 a year with top earners making an average salary of \$388,000.

I am asking that you support reinstating what I earned. This is not a "handout" as I put in 30 years to receive these benefits.

Betsy Bridgett

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