



Fraternal Order of Police
Montgomery County Lodge 35

FOP35MAIL@FOP35.COM

Phone 301.948.4286 Fax 301.590.0317

TESTIMONY

SB431 - Workers' Compensation – Occupational Disease Presumption – Long COVID
(Home of the Brave Act of 2024)

FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS

Dear Chairs Beidle and Wilson, and honorable members of the Senate Finance Committee and the House Economic Matters Committee:

As a current Montgomery County law enforcement officer and the current President of Montgomery County Fraternal Order of Police Lodge 35 (Lodge 35), on behalf of our lodge which proudly represents over 1500 active and retired Montgomery County law enforcement officer, I write in strong support of SB431, the Home of the Brave Act, and I ask for a favorable report.

Throughout the period encompassing Governor Hogan's declaration of a COVID-19 "State of Emergency" from March 5, 2020, to July 1, 2021, numerous frontline workers in the public sector were mandated to continue their duties, despite facing heightened risks of infection and related health challenges. These individuals were classified as "essential" due to the nature of their responsibilities, which necessitated their physical presence to ensure the uninterrupted continuity of critical governmental services. This indispensable group of workers include fire and rescue personnel, healthcare professionals, law enforcement officers, educators at various levels, park service personnel, and numerous others essential to maintaining governmental operations during the declared emergency.

While many of these dedicated individuals contracted COVID-19 and subsequently recovered, a significant portion fell victim to what is now recognized as Long COVID, a complex condition characterized by a myriad of persistent health issues following initial infection. According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), Long COVID encompasses a spectrum of symptoms ranging from respiratory and cardiovascular disorders to neurological complications, musculoskeletal ailments, and various other debilitating conditions. Regrettably, there remains no definitive cure for this affliction.

Tragically, a considerable number of frontline workers grappling with Long COVID have encountered hurdles in accessing workers' compensation benefits for their service-related disabilities. The proposed legislation under SB341 acknowledges the extraordinary sacrifices made by these individuals by establishing a presumption for Long COVID as an occupational disease, specifically for those who diligently fulfilled their duties throughout the duration of Governor Hogan's declared state of emergency.

We ask the committee to consider amending the period for testing positive for Covid-19 from July 15, 2021 to September 1, 2021. This amendment would cover essential workers who contacted Covid-19 during the Governor's declared state of emergency but didn't test positive until later. In rare cases, it has taken almost 30 days to test positive from Covid-19 from initial contact.

It is incumbent upon us to provide the necessary care and compensation to these courageous frontline workers who have selflessly dedicated themselves to safeguarding our communities, often at great personal risk. As such, I implore you to support this critical measure, and I ask for a favorable report.

With sincerest regards,

Lee Holland
President
Montgomery County Fraternal Order of Police Lodge 35