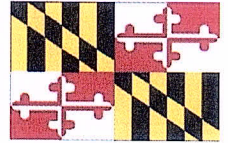




CLYDE BOATWRIGHT
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March 4, 2024

SB 431 - Workers' Compensation -Occupational Disease Presumption- Long COVID (Home of the Brave Act of 2024)

Dear Chairman Smith and Distinguished Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee,

The Maryland State Fraternal Order of Police **SUPPORTS** Senate Bill 431 - **Workers' Compensation - Occupational Disease Presumption- Long COVID (Home of the Brave Act of 2024)**.

Public Safety Personnel were placed in harm's way daily during the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic. While many citizens remained secure in their houses and were able to work remotely or have their workplaces completely shut down, Public Safety Personnel came to work and risked their lives taking calls for service and regularly interacting with the public during critical incidents and necessary interactions and calls for service. As a result, many members of Public Safety agencies contracted COVID-19 because of their workplace contacts. The result for our Public Safety Community was that many members paid the ultimate sacrifice and died because of this terrible disease, and many did recover; However, there have also been those that are still suffering from the long-term side effects which have become known as "Long COVID". **SB 431**, if passed, will recognize, and create a presumption for Long COVID as a workplace exposure, for those brave men and women that now suffer from the disease.

SB 431 defines the "Governmental Essential Worker", which includes Public Safety Personnel, and further defines COVID-19 and Long COVID. **SB431** then establishes that the "Governmental Essential Worker is presumed to be suffering from an occupational disease that was suffered in the course of employment and is compensable" under the Worker's Compensation Statutes of Maryland if the member was diagnosed with COVID-19 on or after March 5, 2020, but before July 1, 2021. **SB 431** further mandates that the diagnoses of COVID-19 must be within 14 days after a day that the member was at work and performing labor or services and not at their residence. The diagnosis made or test performed as well as the subsequent diagnosis of Long COVID must be by a person authorized, licensed, or certified to do so under the Health Occupations Article. **SB431** also makes this presumption rebuttable with substantial evidence that the disease was contracted outside of the workplace.

SB 431 would have a limited set of members that would be eligible for this presumption. This would go a long way to show those that sacrificed their health for the safety and wellbeing of others during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic that their Government appreciates their service and commitment and desires to properly compensate them for the costs that they will incur due to contracting Long COVID.

On behalf of the more than 20,000 Courageous Men and Women of the Maryland Fraternal Order of Police we thank you for your support and ask for your **FAVORABLE** vote on **Workers' Compensation - Occupational Disease Presumption- Long COVID (Home of the Brave Act of 2024)**.

Angelo L. Consoli Jr,
2nd Vice President, FOP, Maryland State Lodge
President, FOP Lodge 89, Prince George's County