



Wes Moore | Governor
Aruna Miller | Lt. Governor
Kevin A. Anderson | Secretary of Commerce
Signe Pringle | Deputy Secretary of Commerce

DATE: February 29, 2024
BILL NO: Senate Bill 477
BILL TITLE: Time To Serve Act of 2024
COMMITTEE: Senate Finance
POSITION: Support

The Maryland Department of Commerce (Commerce) supports Senate Bill 477 – Time To Serve Act of 2024.

Bill Summary:

Senate Bill 477 increases from 15 to 30 the maximum number of disaster service leave with pay days an employee in the Executive Branch may use in any 12-month period with supervisory approval. This bill also increases from 15 to 30 the maximum number of days of paid leave the Secretary of Budget and Management may provide to State employees for uniformed services training or active uniformed services duty in a reserve unit of the armed forces or organized militia.

Background:

Under current law, all employees, including temporary employees of the Executive, Judicial and Legislative branches of State government, including any unit with an independent personnel system, may be entitled to 15 days of disaster leave with pay. To qualify, the employee has to be certified by the American Red Cross as a disaster service volunteer and the American Red Cross has to request their services during a disaster that is designated in their regulations and procedures as a Level II or above. Employees who are a member of the Civil Air Patrol, United States Coast Guard Auxiliary, Maryland Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster, a volunteer emergency medical services department, a volunteer fire department, a volunteer rescue company or volunteer rescue squad or a Community Emergency Response Team are also eligible for this paid leave benefit.

Additionally, under current law the Secretary of Budget and Management may provide up to 15 days of leave with pay for employees to participate in uniformed services training or active uniformed services duty in a reserve unit of the armed forces or in an organized militia. As an example, this benefit could be used by an employee who is a member of the National Guard or Reserves and must travel out of town for drill training once a month.

Rationale:

Increasing paid leave for State employees who volunteer for disaster service from 15 to 30 days ensures a greater pool of volunteers who can serve for a longer period of time should a disaster occur. Given the shortage of individuals trained in this service area, and the difficulty recruiting and retaining volunteers and emergency service professionals in the State, allowing the existing

volunteers to work longer simply makes sense. Employees who are not paid or have to use their leave benefits to volunteer are less likely to serve in this capacity.

Further, expanding the number of days of paid leave for State employees enrolled in the National Guard and Reserves for training and active duty ensures these individuals are fully supported by the State in both of their areas of service. State employees should not have to use their personal leave for time they spend meeting their military service obligations, thus resulting in having no leave available for their personal needs. Expanding paid leave to 30 days will align with their military service obligations. This policy change will also assist the State in being able to recruit qualified employees who serve in the National Guard and Reserves. Commerce has at least one employee who would be personally impacted by this legislation, and the Department has other roles and responsibilities that would benefit from having an individual with military service fulfill them.

Commerce respectfully requests a favorable report on Senate Bill 477.