

SenatorBailey_FAV_SB647_House.pdf

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Position: FAV

JACK BAILEY
Legislative District 29
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Budget & Taxation Committee



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April 8, 2026

**Senate Bill 647 - Law Enforcement Officers' Pension System and State Police Retirement System - Line-of-Duty
Catastrophic Injury Disability**

Dear Chair Barnes and Members of the Committee,

I am writing to introduce Senate Bill 647. This bill will provide a line-of-duty disability allowance to be paid to a member of the Law Enforcement Officers' Pension System (LEOPS) or the State Police Retirement System (SPRS) who is found to be disabled and unable to engage in any substantial gainful activity.

Under current law, a member of one of these pension systems who is disabled in the line of duty can receive an allowance equal to two-thirds of their compensation at the time of the injury. Two years ago, the Joint Chairmen's Report requested that the State Retirement Agency report on how Maryland could award a special and accidental disability benefit for catastrophic injuries that result in a member of these two pension systems being unable to work in any capacity equal to 100% of the member's annual compensation at the time their injury occurred. Senate Bill 647 is intended to accomplish this objective and provide this benefit.

The current 66 2/3 benefit is intended to account for the fact that about one-third of the individual's paycheck would be taxed otherwise. However, this does not account for other paycheck deductions that many of us are familiar with, particularly the cost of health insurance. Providing this enhanced benefit to our police who have been catastrophically injured in the line of duty will ensure that their income can continue to cover their cost of living, and that their disability does not result in an effective reduction in the amount of income they receive.

Senate Bill 647 will support those officers who have become catastrophically injured in the line of duty while protecting the residents of this State. I know that this subcommittee understands the importance of ensuring that our State takes care of the brave men and women who work to keep Maryland safe.

Senate Bill 647 passed the Senate 45-0. I respectfully request a favorable report on Senate Bill 647. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Bailey'.

Senator Jack Bailey

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Uploaded by: Nicole Mcdonald

Position: UNF

Testimony on SB0647: Law Enforcement - Catastrophic Injury Disability

Position: UNFAVORABLE

Committee: House Appropriations

Date: Wednesday, April 8, 2026

The Statement:

"Good afternoon, Chair and members of the Committee. My name is Nicole McDonald. I'm a mother from Baltimore and a former correctional worker.

I'm here to testify **UNFAVORABLE** on SB0647 because the double standard in this bill is staggering. I have been **seriously injured on the job several times** myself. I know what it's like to put your body on the line for this state and to have to live with those injuries every single day.

But I cannot support a bill that picks favorites. We are talking about fast-tracking a 100% 'platinum' payout for life for police, but where is that same energy for the people they harm? When officers kill or seriously injure people in our streets, the system doesn't fast-track consequences—half the time they don't face any at all, and the victims certainly aren't compensated for their lives. **So why are the police lives more valuable?**

The state is treating these payouts like they're doing a huge favor, but the reality is they're treating workers' earned pensions like a personal piggy bank they can dip into whenever they feel like it. Why is an officer's life or comfort worth 100% of their salary, but the lives they take or the families they leave behind aren't worth the same effort? Why isn't a teacher's life worth 100%? Why isn't a social worker's?

Every public-facing job is dangerous now. We have training and safety measures put in place for a reason. If they are trained, why is this happening? You want to talk about 'losing money,' but the state isn't losing anything. You have a **Rainy Day Fund with \$2.2 billion** sitting in it. Y'all don't have a problem managing that money, do you? But you make our seniors struggle for pennies on their pensions and make them wait until they are old and can't do anything anymore to get what they earned.

Since when did we become so comfortable as a state openly valuing people's lives differently? You want to fast-track 100% for a group that already has the most protection in the world, while everyone else gets 66%. They are doing a job they were trained for, just like everyone else. This isn't just about who is serving the state, but about who the state is **disserving**.

If you don't want to give this to the police, you need to give it to **everybody**—all the workers and all the people who the state has caused harm to. Why is one group less than, or not thought about, while the other is put on a pedestal? Stop picking and choosing. If you aren't ready to give

this same 100% to every single person who is seriously injured or harmed by this state, then you shouldn't be giving it to anyone. This is one-sided, it is not equal, and it is not justice.

Thank you.