

JACK BAILEY
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Calvert and St. Mary's Counties

Budget & Taxation Committee



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

Dear Chair Lewis Young and Members of the Subcommittee,

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.

This bill is similar to a bill that I sponsored last year, Senate Bill 812, but has been revised to address some of the concerns that were discussed during the consideration of that legislation. I am submitting with this bill an amendment that makes the bill's provisions consistent for each System. I respectfully request a favorable report on Senate Bill 647 with this amendment. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

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

Senator Jack Bailey