

Testimony in support of SB0044 - State Retirement

Uploaded by: Richard KAP Kaplowitz

Position: FAV

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Richard Keith Kaplowitz
Frederick, MD 21703

TESTIMONY ON SB#/0044- POSITION: FAVORABLE

State Retirement and Pension System - Forfeiture of Benefits

TO: Chair Guzzone, Vice Chair Rosapepe, and members of the Budget & Taxation Committee
FROM: Richard Keith Kaplowitz

My name is Richard Keith Kaplowitz. I am a resident of District 3, Frederick County. I am submitting this testimony in support of SB#/0044, State Retirement and Pension System - Forfeiture of Benefits

This bill appears to be a reaction to a recent case in Baltimore and the need to react to that specific situation as well as applying it equally across Maryland government. As reported by Fox45 News *After felony conviction, Baltimore Officer keeps pension, reviving calls for law change*¹

Earlier this month, in federal court, former Baltimore City Schools Police Officer Lawrence Smith, pleaded guilty to felony wire fraud and income tax evasion. Smith admitted, in court, to submitting fraudulent police overtime forms to collect \$215,000 taxpayer dollars. His convictions carry a maximum sentence of 25 years in prison.

“It's the principle,” David Williams with the Taxpayers Protection Alliance told Project Baltimore. “You should not have access to any more taxpayer dollars.”

This bill will declare that a person working as a public employee in Maryland will not benefit from their crime. It will do this by establishing that a public employee is subject to forfeiture of benefits from the State Retirement and Pension System when a public employee is found guilty of, pleads guilty to, or enters a plea of nolo contendere to a qualifying crime that is committed in the course of the performance of the public employee's duties; providing for the processes and procedures to implement a forfeiture of benefits; and providing for the processes and procedures to reverse a forfeiture of benefits.

This bill promotes ethical conduct by public employees in Maryland to avoid this substantial penalty for specific types of misconduct in office.

I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on SB#/0044.

¹ <https://foxbaltimore.com/news/project-baltimore/baltimore-school-police-officer-felony-pension-maryland-law-change>

Canaa Campbell updated.pdf

Uploaded by: shanell dixon

Position: FAV

Hi, my name is Canaa Campbell, and I am a proud graduate of the We Rise program.

Being part of We Rise had a real impact on my life. The program helped me gain clarity, confidence, and direction. I learned how to set goals, manage my finances, prepare for the workforce, and communicate in a more professional way.

One of the most important things I learned through We Rise was how to set a goal and create a plan to reach it. I learned that goals don't just happen, they take intention, structure, and follow-through.

My goal is to teach people how to cook.

The steps I have identified to achieve my goal are:

First I need to finish school and save my money so, I can buy my cooking things to start my practice.

Second, I need to make a page dedicated to my cooking, to show people how to cook and tell them how it would benefit them.

Third, Keep up with my progress and reflect when it is needed, to avoid stress.

We Rise taught me that progress happens one step at a time and that staying consistent matters.

Having We Rise in Park Heights means our community is being supported and invested in. It shows that our potential is seen and valued. We Rise created a space where I felt encouraged, challenged, and prepared for what's next.

I'm grateful for this experience, and I'm confident that the lessons and skills I gained from We Rise will continue to guide me moving forward.

SB44.PensionForfit.26.pdf

Uploaded by: Virginia Crespo

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SB 44
In Opposition Of
State Retirement and Pension System – Forfeiture of Benefits
Budget and Taxation Committee
Hearing:

Dear Honorable Senator Guy Guzzone, Senator Jim Rosapepe, Vice Chair, and distinguished Committee members,

The Maryland Retired School Personnel Association opposes SB 44 State Retirement and Pension System – Forfeiture of Benefits.

MRSPA works to protect defined benefit pensions and a secure retirement for all Marylanders. The money invested in the pension system was accrued over a lifetime of work. This money was earned in years of service to the system in which they were employed. The money belongs to the individual earning it not to the system employing them.

The person committing the crime will receive a fair trial and will be subject to the will of the court. Nothing in the sentence includes punishment for the families involved. Although this bill includes some relief for these families, it also suggests years of litigation. This is not to say that punishment for the serious crimes described in this bill is not warranted. But this is the domain of the judicial system not of the legislature adding additional penalties. While we agree that Marylanders want state employees of all areas to be trustworthy and honest, penalizing the convicted after they have served their time or their unknowing family by taking away their means of income is not fair or justifiable.

Finally, false accusations, especially against teachers, are not an uncommon occurrence. It is difficult for a bill like this to provide provisions for recovering the losses incurred by a teacher or any former employee in this situation. A retired former state employee and/or their family is entitled to the pension into which they paid and worked to earn.

On behalf of the 12,000 members of the Maryland Retired School Personnel Association, we urge your opposition to SB 44.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Elizabeth H. Weller". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Elizabeth H. Weller
President

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Virginia G. Crespo". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Virginia G. Crespo
Legislative Aide