

ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY PENSION OVERSIGHT COMMISSION

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November 13th 2024

Via: Electronic mail

County Executive Steuart Pittman
Anne Arundel County
44 Calvert Street
Annapolis, MD. 21401

Mr. Pittman,

In accordance with the procedures set forth in the County Charter, the Pension Oversight Commission (Commission) has reviewed the proposed legislation presented in **Bill 85-24** as introduced by Councilmember Ms. Allison Pickard. Following our review, we **SUPPORT** passage of Bill 85-24. The Bill will allow members of the Police Service and Fire Service Retirement Plans to purchase up to a maximum of five years of service credit if hired as a lateral employee from another agency in a Maryland jurisdiction. The service credit will be applied at the end of an employee's normal retirement (vesting) date and would not reduce the number of years an employee would need to serve in order to be eligible for a pension benefit. The Commission believes the provisions of the Bill will enhance the County's ability to recruit, hire and retain lateral employees for the impacted agencies who will be prepared to serve its citizens due to their training and experience.

The Commission agrees with the purpose and language of the Bill. The Commission is aware the Bill resulted from contract negotiations with the affected employee groups and is supported by members of those bargaining units. The Bill provides public safety agencies within the County a means to recruit and hire more experienced professionals possessing the requisite training at a time when staffing shortages are negatively impacting their respective missions. The Commission has learned the Police Department is struggling to recruit entry-level officers to fill seats in the academy while the Fire Department faces the challenge of hiring paramedics into their ranks. The provisions of the Bill offer an attractive benefit these agencies will use to address the staffing crisis.

The Commission was made aware of concerns regarding the employee versus County cost-sharing element of a previous bill. Bill 85-24 has successfully addressed those concerns through negotiations. The Commission has been briefed on the higher cost associated with the lengthy training required for the affected entry-level positions. The Commission agrees the Bill will help reduce that cost by enhancing the hiring of lateral staff who are qualified to begin service within weeks of employment rather than after a year or more of training.

The Commission believes passage of the Bill will result in the hiring of more experienced lateral employees from other Maryland jurisdictions. The advantages of hiring lateral police officers, fire fighters and paramedics cannot be overstated. These individuals are hired with a track record in their profession often spanning years. Unlike new recruits, they have already demonstrated a commitment to public service and are more frequently retained as long-term employees.

The Pension Oversight Commission believes it is appropriate for the County to pass the Bill in order to provide its Police and Fire Departments with a benefit they can advertise which will enhance the hiring of experienced, highly trained and veteran lateral professionals from across the state. For all of the above-described reasons, the Pension Oversight Commission **SUPPORTS** passage of Bill 85-24.

Sincerely,

Anne Arundel County Pension Oversight Commission:

Vincent Carbonaro

Vincent Carbonaro, Chair

Jamie McIntosh; Ed Gosselin; Sherri Voelkel, Mark Humphries; Adam Hertz, Julius Jones Jr.; Nicole Clinton; Michael Kropp

CC: Anne Arundel County Council: Julie Hummer; Allison Pickard; Nathan Volke; Shannon Leadbetter; Amanda Fiedler; Lisa Rodvien; Peter Smith, County Council Administrative Officer Kaley Schultz, and Personnel Officer Anne Budowski