

SENATE BILL 578

ORAL TESTIMONY BY SHEILA TOLLIVER ON BEHALF OF SHEILA AND LARRY TOLLIVER Hearing March 2, 2022 in the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee

I am Sheila Tolliver, and I am testifying in support of Senate Bill 578 on behalf of my husband, Larry Tolliver, and myself. We reside at 1526 Catbriar Way, Odenton, MD.

We both are State retirees, together having 58 years of creditable service in the retirement system. Larry, who served in the Maryland State Police for 28 years, retired as Superintendent in 1995. He has carried our health insurance benefits throughout his employment and retirement.

In written testimony and in a letter sent to each of you, I have provided details explaining our support. Today, with limited time, I provide just two compelling reasons for your support:

First, the State has a moral and contractual obligation to its retirees to provide the benefits, equal to those of active State employees. They were promised in law until 2011, when they were abridged. This not only is our opinion, but also that of the federal judge who has given careful consideration to the issue since 2018, as he spelled out in his Opinion Memorandum of December 30, 2021.

Second, the appropriate time to correct the error is now. The State's fiscal health is strong. The benefit has been funded without harm to the State's priorities or credit worthiness since its inception. Expecting retirees on modest fixed incomes to fight in court for a benefit they so clearly have earned is life-threatening to some and insensitive to all.

Eliminating the benefit was an error, both in its expectation that Federal benefit changes would negate the need for it and in its assumption that Maryland's laws granting the benefit were not, in fact, a contractual obligation. Passing SB 578, which restores the benefit for those hired before 2011, will correct those errors.