



MARYLAND PROFESSIONAL EMPLOYEES COUNCIL

AFT, AFL-CIO Local 6197

A union of professionals
in service to the people
of Maryland.

Written Testimony to the Budget & Taxation Committee SB 578 - State Prescription Drug Benefits – Retirees March 2, 2022

SUPPORT

Good morning Mr. Chair and members of the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee. On behalf of the Maryland Professional Employees Council, AFT- Local 6197, representing over 5,000 professional employees for the state of Maryland, we ask for a favorable report on SB578. This bill makes sure the state follows through on the promise it made to state employees when it came time for those employees to retire by reinstating that State Retiree Prescription Drug benefit to state employees who began work before July 2011.

No one who decides to spend their careers in the service of our state does so with the idea that they will become rich. We love our state and we do feel a sense of community when we are able to bring important services to the residents of Maryland in order to make our state the best it can be. We do hope that we as state workers will be compensated fairly, and at an appropriate level based on our expertise, experience, and level of training. When the time comes for us to retire, we expect that our employer, who has benefitted so greatly by the many years of service we have given Maryland, will in turn follow-through on its commitment to do right by its retirees in the form of a stable, steady, defined income, coupled with helping us handle the costs of our health care and prescription drugs.

SB 578 reaffirms the commitment the state made to its workers when it came time for those workers to retire. It is patently unfair to change what amounts to deferred compensation to state workers once those workers have already completed their work for the state. Many of these state employees live on fixed incomes and cannot go back to work in order to afford the prescriptions they need for survival. For far too many state employees, the move to discontinue the retiree prescription drug plan was seen as a slap in the face; that Maryland employees are expendable, and the compensation they get for their service to Maryland is too often used as a piggy bank to fund other state budget deficiencies.

This bill sends a clear message to our state workers and retirees—that we value their work, that their contribution to the state should be honored, and that the state follows through on the promises it makes. It is for these reasons we call for a favorable report to SB 578. Thank you.

Jerry Smith
President

