

Letter of Support.pdf

Uploaded by: Daniel McHugh

Position: FAV



WICOMICO COUNTY, MARYLAND

OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

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Julie M. Giordano
County Executive

Bunky Luffman
Director of Administration

Senate Budget and Taxation Committee
Attn: Hon. Senator / Chairman Guy Guzzone
3 West
Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: MD 2023 SB 68 Law Enforcement Officers' Pension – Crisfield Police Department

Senator / Chairman Guzzone & Senate Budget & Taxation Committee Members,

Please accept this as a letter of support for *MD 2023 SB 68 Law Enforcement Officers' Pension – Crisfield Police Department*.

As County Executive of Wicomico County, I have made a strong pledge to support law enforcement & public safety of our communities and citizens here in Wicomico County. In addition, I campaigned to take a regional approach to issues where my administration can help support our region. This bill does both, supporting the men and woman of law enforcement in our neighboring county, Somerset.

I applaud this bill and Senator Carozza's great efforts to support law enforcement & public safety. This bill will help with retention and recruitment of police officers in the town of Crisfield by improving their pension system. We are seeing the problem with staffing shortages of police departments across our state, region, and county. For example, in Montgomery County, our state's largest county, their department is 8% shy of reaching its staffing goal, while here in Wicomico, we are 10% shy in our Sherriff's department.

A stronger police department in Crisfield means a safer Somerset County, which benefits Wicomico County and the region. As a state and region, we owe our support to our brave men and women in blue who make the sacrifice every day to keep our communities & citizens safe.

For these reasons, I respectfully ask the committee for a favorable report for *MD 2023 SB 68 Law Enforcement Officers' Pension – Crisfield Police Department*.

Thank You,



Julie M. Giordano
Wicomico County Executive

LEOPS TESTIMONY.pdf

Uploaded by: Darlene Taylor

Position: FAV

Crisfield Must Have LEOPS

Greetings! My name is Darlene Taylor and I am the newly elected Mayor of Crisfield, first African American and first female to be elected. I was born and raised in this community, spent 20 years in DC working for a major defense contractor, returned home to start a youth non-profit, It Takes Village to Help Our Children. Highly engaged in my community. I was sworn in as mayor on June 22, 2022 and one of the first stories I heard was about our need to recruit and retain good police officers. We only had 6 out of 12 slots filled.

A big part of the problem I was told was because our Department was not able to participate in LEOPS because we are in a non-contributory retirement plan. I was told that it is almost impossible to get and keep good officers and I was told a story that opened my eyes to the urgency of our problem:

J.P. a 34 year veteran on our police force is a hometown hero, we went to the same high school and everyone in the community knows, loves, and respects him as 'good policeman'. Turns out, if J.P. retires tomorrow, after 34 years of service, he would only receive about \$1100 a month in retirement. For me and everyone I tell this story to, that is totally unacceptable. An officer who gets up everyday, puts on the uniform, and puts his life on the line to protect our citizens, deserves more than a pittance. J.P.'s story is a human story, he says he never left our force because he loves Crisfield. He has 4 sons, the youngest is 17, so he would like to retire someday in the not too distant future. His oldest son is special needs, so J.P. will still be responsible for his care. His retirement is a big deal and we must honor his service and his sacrifice by making sure, it is something he can at least survive on.

Unfortunately, the City being in a non-contributory plan was based on a flawed leadership decision made many years ago, that has to be corrected. It's impacts are far and wide in trying to recruit and retain quality police officers in today's environment.

Our Police Chief, Rick Taylor has been on the Crisfield Police Department for 17 years. He became Chief in April of last year, 2022, after the previous Chief left for a better opportunity.

Crisfield is slated to have 12 police officers, but as of today, we only have 7, including the Chief.

Many times we only have one officer on duty, the community knows we are short staffed so that poses an additional safety risk for our citizens.

With only one officer on duty, if he has to run a prisoner to the detention center or any other issues, the Somerset County Sheriff's Office is often called in to fill in for us

Recruitment and Retention is almost impossible without a decent retirement plan

- The Chief came in at badge #133, we are currently at badge #177 so we have seen 39 people come and go since he was hired, for a small force like ours that's a lot of turnover
- In the last year we lost 4 Officers who left because of the opportunity to have LEOPS – Even though we offer less pay, Officers say they enjoy working here because they like the people and the job, but they need the retirement (Officers who have left say they miss the camaraderie)

- Chief reached out to other officers for referrals and was told that although they knew of officers interested in applying to other agencies, they would not come to the Crisfield Department because we do not have LEOPS

But not just any officers, we need the ability to recruit and retain quality officers:

- We have a standing vacancy notice and in the last year we have processed 5 people for hire and have not been able to on-board any of them for various personnel issues
- It is extremely difficult to locate and hire minority officers, there have been 3 in the pipeline but we have major difficulty getting them through the process, the fact that other departments offer LEOPS has been a factor, as well
- Interested applicants are aware of the value and always ask during the interview process, do we have LEOPS? it is in many cases a deciding factor

Competition for hire is fierce in our small rural area, the majority of the surrounding law enforcement agencies offer LEOPS, including:

- Princess Anne Police, UMES Police, Somerset Sheriff's Office, Fruitland Police, Pocomoke Police Departments
- Mostly recently we hired a certified minority officer who was returning to service and we completed the entire process except review of his personnel file at the Princess Anne Police department, once alerted that we were hiring the individual who was returning to service, the Princess Anne Police department hired him out from under us the next day, they were able to offer him re-enrollment in LEOPS

LEOPS is not a cure all for all of our recruitment and retention issues, but it will help us level the playing field, and we are asking for your help in not only leveling that playing field but also, supporting the officers who despite this major disparity have continued to stay in Crisfield and support our citizens.

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Uploaded by: Richard Taylor

Position: FAV

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Crisfield LEOPS.pdf

Uploaded by: Ronnie Howard

Position: FAV



Office of Sheriff

Somerset County

Maryland

7920 Crisfield Highway, Westover, Maryland 21871

Ronald W. Howard
Sheriff

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January 18, 2023

Dear Senator Carozza,

I am writing this letter of support on behalf of Chief Rick Taylor, Crisfield Police Department. I fully support his efforts to enroll his Agency into the Law Enforcement Officers Pension fund. It is valuable to have this pension system to offer to perspective recruits as well as retaining of personnel. Again, I strongly support Chief Taylor in his endeavor.

Respectfully,


Ronnie Howard
Sheriff

Somerset County

MBC Testimony 1.19.23_FINAL.pdf

Uploaded by: Senator Mary Beth Carozza

Position: FAV

January 19, 2023
The Senate Budget and Taxation Committee
SB 68 – Law Enforcement Officer’s Pension System – Crisfield Police Department
Statement of Support by Bill Sponsor Senator Mary Beth Carozza

Thank you, Chair Jackson, and members of the distinguished Senate Budget and Taxation Pension Subcommittee for allowing me to present Senate Bill 68 – Law Enforcement Officer’s Pension System – Crisfield Police Department.

This legislation would allow the members of the Crisfield Police Department to participate in the Law Enforcement Officers’ Pension System. This is a priority local bill that is absolutely essential to the recruitment and retention of the Crisfield Police Department.

I originally introduced this bill last year. With the unanimous support of this subcommittee and the full Senate Budget and Taxation Committee, it unanimously passed the Senate. It was heard in the House, but did not make final passage in the closing days of the session. I prefiled this local bill this session with the intention of ensuring enough time for consideration in both the Senate and the House for final passage this session.

As way of background, former Crisfield Police Chief David Dalfonso had been working diligently with officials from the Maryland Retirement and Pension System since September 2021 after receiving approval from the Crisfield Mayor and City Council for the Police Department to apply and enter LEOPS. Ms. Anne Gawthrop, Director of Legislative Affairs at the Maryland Retirement and Pension System, has been immensely helpful throughout this entire process, and she is here today to answer any questions related to SB 68.

During this long process, Chief Dalfonso was informed that legislation was required for the Crisfield Police Department to participate in LEOPS as the City of Crisfield currently is participating in a non-contributory retirement system.

Both former Chief Dalfonso and current Crisfield Police Chief Rick Taylor have stressed that securing LEOPS for the officers of the Crisfield Police Department is a key tool to retain and recruit the Crisfield Police workforce. This important bill also will allow the Crisfield Police to remain competitive with neighboring law enforcement agencies and jurisdictions during a rampant law enforcement shortage across the Shore and the State of Maryland.

You will hear from both Crisfield Police Chief Taylor and Crisfield Mayor Darlene Taylor, elected this past June, on the ongoing challenges of the Crisfield Police Department and the importance of passing this local priority bill this session. I have been impressed with the strong coordination between the Chief and the Mayor in working together on this bill, and their strong advocacy on this shared public safety priority. It has been a pleasure and honor to work with them both on passage of SB 68.

Thank you for your kind attention and consideration, and I respectfully ask for a favorable report of SB 68.