

Government Employees Retirement System (GERS)

Opening Testimony re: Bill #36-0012

Good Day Members of the 36th Legislature, staff, viewing and listening audiences, I am Dwane Callwood, Sr. Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Government Employees Retirement System of the Virgin Islands. I appear before you today, along with other members of the GERS team, in support of Bill #36-0012, which seeks to streamline the Disability Retirement Annuity Application process.

All applicants for disability annuities are sent, at the System's expense, to medical specialists for examination and evaluation. As per Title 3 Virgin Islands Code , Section 710a, in all instances, the findings of each of those specialists are sent to our Medical Review Committee for review and consideration. After reviewing the conclusions of the system - selected physicians, The Medical Review Committee meets, interviews the applicant, and makes a recommendation to the Board of Trustees.

Bill #36-0012 creates a "fast-track", allowing applications to bypass the Medical Review Committee step, when the requisite number of GERS - selected physicians (1 in with respect to applications for duty-related disability annuities, and 2 with respect to applications for non-duty related disability annuities) have concluded favorably for the application.

The "fast-track" would shorten the duration of time from application to annuity by months, reduce financial stress on affected applicants, and save the GERS thousands of dollars per application.

In instances where the application has not garnered sufficient support from GERS-selected physicians, the Medical Review Committee step would remain in place.

We would request 2 amendments to the bill, as drafted. We would request on page 1, Line 4 to change "all" to "any". Likewise, on page 2, Line 5 to again change "all" to "any".

In conclusion, I would like to take the opportunity to once again ask for your support as we continue to review our practices and procedures remedy areas of inefficiencies allowing us to better serve our membership.

We remain available to answer any questions.