

HB 0529 Testimony

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My name is Joseph Langford. I am a resident of Park Hall Maryland in Saint Mary's County. I am a disabled veteran that served with the US Army in Operation Iraqi Freedom. I have been a shop steward and member of Patuxent River Local Lodge 4 of the Machinists Union since 2007. I am currently employed as a US Navy Contractor at Patuxent River Naval Air Station. I am also a 20 year Firefighter/EMT with the Ridge Volunteer Fire Department and also serve in several other rescue organizations.

After I began my employment with a US Navy Contractor in 2004, it became obvious that I needed further education to advance in the modern aviation workplace. I attended The College of Southern Maryland in Leonardtown, LaPlata and Waldorf during the evenings for several years and eventually received an associate degree. The skills and experiences that came from these courses gave me a better understanding of how to properly deal with, represent and interact with members of the upcoming generations of aviation workers. Despite the extensive training that military members receive while in service, they often lack skills related to interacting, understanding and being empathetic to non-military and/or younger co-workers. Additionally, the aircraft and technical equipment being used in the civilian sector is often far more advanced than the equivalent military platforms.

Military veterans bring energy, character, and a culture of service before self to society when they integrate back into the civilian sector. According to a survey of over 60,000 households nationwide (1), 37 percent of veterans belong to a group or organization striving to help better its community. The same survey showed only a 27 percent involvement of non-veterans. Additionally, a 2015 US Department of Labor report stated that 10% of EMT's, 19% of Firefighters, and 25% of police officers nationwide are veterans.

HB0529 would allow veterans to reduce barriers to a smooth transition to civilian careers post service. Maryland has a disproportionately large number of military installations in comparison to most other US states. HB0529 would provide an additional incentive for military members leaving service to stay in Maryland and enhance our workforce and our communities.

Retaining these highly skilled, qualified and patriotic veterans will help to staff the ranks of our police departments, career and volunteer fire departments, and other high demand technical career fields. This will also expand our property and income tax base. It also could engrain a loyalty to Maryland residency and reduce costs related to attracting new businesses and investments in our state's economy. Having our veterans in college classrooms with our traditional non-military students will provide a greater educational experience and foster greater diversity and understanding between the groups.

HB0529 is an investment in greater communities, reduced recruitment costs for public agencies, and shows a continued commitment to honoring the sacrifices our veterans have made and continue to make each day.

