



**Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs
Office of the Secretary**

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SECRETARY**

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF House Bill 580
Time to Serve Act of 2024
Appropriations Committee
February 13, 2024**

Thank you Chair Barnes, Vice Chair Chang, and members of the Appropriations committee.

I am honored to appear before you today and I respectfully ask the Committee for a favorable report on the Time to Service Act of 2024 (HB580). This proposed legislation, championed by the Governor and the Lt. Governor, will support state employees that continue to serve in uniform and honor their families too.

Maryland state employees are some of the most committed public servants I have ever met. They work tirelessly to serve the people of Maryland and, in my department's case, to serve our nations' heroes as they write their next chapters here in our state.

For all of our state employees, public service is a calling. For some, their commitment extends beyond their day-to-day role.

Currently, there are around 200 Maryland state employees who don the uniform for our nation's military reserve and national guard components.

They are MDOT operators and mechanics moving Maryland forward.

They are state troopers protecting our communities AND protecting our Governor and Lieutenant Governor on the Executive Protection Unit detail.

And yes... they are Cabinet Secretaries too.

I know firsthand the delicate balance of state service and military duties. While I currently serve as Maryland's Secretary of Veterans Affairs, I am also an Army reservist assigned to the joint staff at the Pentagon.

I know that the pledge of “1 weekend a month, 2 weeks a year,” does not always ring true - particularly when hotspots flare up around the world or extreme weather events occur here in our state.

While our families enjoy summer holidays and football games on weekends, we join our units and continue to serve.

The Time to Serve Act means just as much for our state employees in uniform as it does for their families.

Expanding military leave from 15 days to 30 days is an acknowledgment that uniformed service in the reserves and national guard sometimes extends beyond two weeks. It is our duty to provide them with the time they need to fulfill their obligations to the nation and to our state.

More importantly, it means that a state employee can now use personal leave to spend time with their family, NOT their unit.

It means a father can join a parent-teacher conference, a mother can take care of a child home sick from school, a family can enjoy a trip to Ocean City.

I respectfully ask the Committee for a favorable report on the Time to Serve Act for Maryland's committed state employees and their families.