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Legislative District 10
Baltimore County

Education, Energy, and the
Environment Committee
Energy Subcommittee

Chair, Joint Electric Universal
Service Program Workgroup



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TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB639
Property Tax Exemption – Disabled Veterans – Service-Connected Disability

Budget & Taxation Committee
February 14, 2024

Chair Guzzone, Vice-Chair Rosapepe and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you on SB639, Property Tax Exemption – Disabled Veterans – Service-Connected Disability. The purpose of this bill is to lower the eligibility criteria of a property tax exemption for disabled veterans and surviving spouses of veterans to include veterans with at least an 80% service-connected disability.

Currently under state law, we are operating on an absolute basis, under which a disabled veteran in Maryland may receive a full property tax exemption on their primary residence if the veteran is 100% disabled because of service. While this is extremely beneficial for the 23,200 fully disabled veterans, it does not offer any protections for veterans who suffer from less than 100% disability. According to the Department of Veterans Affairs, there are nearly 17,948 veterans with a service-connected disability between 70 - 90%. Despite their service and sacrifices to our country, they are not eligible for any property tax relief.

Since the tax credit system is already established for 100% disabled veterans, we do not need to create a completely new system. We are merely adjusting the criteria.

Washington County has already implemented a similar measure on a local level under its 2018 Ordinance, expanding the property tax credit to correlate with the level of permanent disability. Maryland has an opportunity with SB639 to become more compassionate in offering an expanded property tax credit program for its veterans, on a statewide level. While we realize this will not encompass all disability veterans, it is a step in the right direction.

As this committee is aware, I am a U.S. Army veteran who had the honor of serving our country in the Vietnam War. Like many of my comrades, I too have been afflicted by some of the hazards of war. Agent Orange is a defoliant that was used to remove leaves from trees and plants. The herbicide was heavily sprayed for tactical use from 1961 to 1971. It subjected several troops to numerous complications, including cancer. While I commend the State for its current support of 100% disabled veterans, we cannot neglect our other heroes.

Maryland must do more for those who have sacrificed so much. While SB639 does not go far enough to assist all disabled veterans, lowering the eligibility requirement to an 80% service-connected disability, will still help thousands of men and women. Moreover, SB639 will also set Maryland apart in the region as offering one of the most generous property tax reliefs for disabled veterans. We can and we must do more by our brave men and women.

For these reasons, I am requesting a favorable report on SB639.

With kindest regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Benjamin T. Brooks".

Benjamin Brooks