



Letter of Support

House Health and Government Operations Committee *House Bill 431 (Pruski) Department of Veterans Affairs – Renaming and Deputy Secretary of Military Family Policy and Programs*

Matt Power, President
mpower@micua.org
February 6, 2024

On behalf of the member institutions of the Maryland Independent College and University Association (MICUA) and the nearly 55,000 students we serve, I thank you for the opportunity to provide this letter of written testimony in support of [House Bill 431 \(Pruski\) Department of Veterans Affairs – Renaming and Deputy Secretary of Military Family Policy and Programs](#). The bill renames the Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs (MDVA) to the Department of Veterans and Military Families (DVMF) and the Secretary of Veterans to be the Secretary of Veterans and Military Families. MDVA, in partnership with the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC), is required to actively assist veterans and their dependents to access education and training benefits.

The Maryland College Collaboration for Student Veterans Commission was established in 2016 (Ch.413 of 2016), and MICUA is a designated representative on the Commission. The Commission’s work consists of “ensuring the educational success of returning veterans, including their recruitment, successful transition into higher education, retention, and eventual graduation.” The Legislature passed the Veterans Advocacy and Education Act (Ch. 73 of 2022) to create a central location within MDVA for veterans to learn more about the various educational opportunities in the State and improve access to obtain a college degree and training for the workforce. HB 431 would capture in name the impact and goals of MDVA which is to support the educational pursuits of veterans and their families. Several MICUA institutions have deep connections to military bases located in close proximity and they have demonstrated a strong commitment to provide a supportive school environment for all students, including veterans and their families.

If you have any questions or would like additional information, please contact Irnande Altema, Associate Vice President for Government and Business Affairs, ialtema@micua.org.

For these reasons, MICUA urges a favorable Committee report for House Bill 431.