

EDITH J. PATTERSON, Ed.D.

Legislative District 28
Charles County

Ways and Means Committee

Subcommittees

Local Revenues

Chair, Racing and Gaming

Chair, Southern Maryland
House Delegation



The Maryland House of Delegates
6 Bladen Street, Room 429
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-841-3247 · 301-858-3247
800-492-7122 Ext. 3247
Edith.Patterson@house.state.md.us

THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Testimony in Support of HB1026
Armed Forces- Support of Military Families and Addition of Space Force
March 8, 2024

Good afternoon, Chair Pena-Melnyk, Vice-Chair Cullison and Members of the House Health and Government Operations Committee. For the record, I am Delegate Edith Patterson, sponsor of HB1026 - Armed Forces - Support of Military Families and Addition of Space Force.

First, HB1026 requests the inclusion of the United States Space Force within the definition of armed forces, to broaden support for the “armed forces” by including all uniformed services and military families will be equally represented under all state laws defining “military service”, “military retiree”, and “veteran.” This will update Maryland’s definition of military service to align with Title 10 of the United States Code. Clearly defining “armed forces”, will help reduce disruptions in benefits and services for eligible service members and dependents, particularly for the 269 members of the United States Space Force currently living in Maryland, and their 381 dependents.

Second, HB1026 works to protect service members and their dependents as consumers beyond the federal Service Members Civil Relief Act (SCRA). Presently, federal law does not protect guard component service members concerning obligations that occur while on active duty who live in Maryland and serve in a neighboring state, or who work in Maryland but live in a neighboring state, when ordered to active duty by the Governor of the neighboring state. The legislation also protects military spouses when moving from one state to another when they may need to cancel contracts for gym or athletic club members, satellite radio services and even residential agreements. This legislation will authorize military spouses and residents of the State who are members of the National Guard of another state, or reserve component, to terminate certain contracts once a service member receives military orders to relocate providing additional consumer protections.

Third, HB 1026 adds Space Force and members of the National Guard to the definition of “military-connected student” for the purposes of the Purple Star Schools Program, legislation that I introduced, and was signed into law, two years ago.

And finally, there is an amendment being proposed. The request came from Major General Birkhead, the adjutant general of Maryland, asking to include language that would allow Harriet Tubman to be posthumously awarded an officer commission in the Maryland Defense Force for her service in the Union Army as a spy, scout and a nurse.

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In summary, this legislation ensures that all service members and their families are equally represented under all state laws and provides additional consumer protections for all our service members. I respectfully urge you to vote favorably for HB1026.

Thank you for your consideration,

Edith Patterson
Charles County