



**Metropolitan
Washington Ear**

Committee: Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment

Bill Number: Senate Bill 85– Braille Flag Memorial Act of 2025

Hearing Date: February 6, 2025

Position: Support

Metropolitan Washington Ear, Inc. (MWE) located in Silver Spring, Maryland, is a nonprofit, 501(c)(3) organization incorporated under the laws of the State of Maryland. MWE provides reading and information services, and independent living skills training for blind, visually impaired, and physically disabled people who cannot effectively read print, see plays, watch television programs and films, or view museum exhibits. Established in 1974, we've been providing quality services throughout Maryland, Virginia, and the District of Columbia for more than 50 years. As an organization that serves those who are blind and visually impaired (some who are members of the uniformed services, veterans, and other individuals in the State), we **SUPPORT** SB 85.

SB 85 would require the Department of Veterans and Military Affairs to designate a location for an American braille tactile flag to be placed on the grounds of one or more of the State's veterans' cemeteries as authorized by the Secretary to honor members of the uniformed services, veterans, and other individuals in the State who are blind or visually impaired.

Randolph Cabral, President of the Kansas Braille Transcription Institute (KBTI) and the son of a World War II blind veteran created the tactile/Braille American Flag to honor his father. In February 2008, through the combined efforts of the Blinded Veterans Association (BVA), KBTI, and U.S. Congressman Todd Tiahrt, the U.S. Congress unanimously authorized the placement of a bronze monument of the Braille Flag at Arlington National Cemetery as a tribute to blind veterans of all wars, and other blind Americans. In April 2008, the Braille flag was officially installed at the cemetery representing a Braille replica of the U.S. American Flag.

The Braille flags are displayed in hundreds of locations around the country, including places such as the National September 11 Memorial & Museum, the Women in Military Service for America Memorial across from Arlington National Cemetery, the State Capitol in Topeka, numerous Veterans Affairs hospitals, and the offices of other military organizations. MWE believes a braille tactile flag is important to honor the contribution of the uniformed services, veterans, and other individuals in the State who have served and protected our country by requiring the Department of Veterans and Military Affairs to designate a location for an American braille tactile flag to be placed on the grounds of the State's veterans' cemeteries.

For these reasons, MWE **supports SB 85** and **asks the committee for a favorable report**.

If we can provide any additional information, please contact Jocelyn I. Collins at jcollins@policypartners.net.