



**Maryland Department of Veterans and Military Families
Office of the Secretary**

WES MOORE
GOVERNOR

ARUNA MILLER
LT. GOVERNOR

ANTHONY C. WOODS
SECRETARY

**Senate Bill 137 - Education - High School Diploma - Veterans of Armed Conflicts
SUPPORT**

January 24, 2025

The Honorable Brian J. Feldman
Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Chair Feldman and Committee Members,

The Maryland Department of Veterans and Military Families (DVMF) is committed to leading veterans and their families through life's transitions, making Maryland the best state for the military-connected communities. DVMF fulfills its mission through five core programs: the Service and Benefits Program, which helps veterans access federal, state, and local earned benefits; Charlotte Hall Veterans Home, offering assisted living and skilled nursing care; the Cemetery and Memorial Program, providing dignified resting places and maintaining memorials honoring Maryland's veterans; the Communications, Outreach, and Advocacy Program, fostering connection and awareness; and the Maryland Veterans Trust Fund, offering financial assistance to veterans and their families in need. These programs reflect Maryland's commitment to honoring and empowering its military-connected community.

The Maryland Department of Veterans and Military Families supports Senate Bill 137- Education - High School Diploma - Veterans of Armed Conflicts.

DVMF believes this legislation is a critical step in recognizing and honoring the sacrifices made by Maryland's veterans. By broadening eligibility for high school diplomas to include all veterans of authorized armed conflicts, SB 137 ensures that those who interrupted their education to serve our country receive the acknowledgment and opportunities they deserve.

The military-connected community in Maryland will benefit significantly from this bill in the following ways:

1. **Recognition of Service and Sacrifice:** Many veterans left school to serve in times of need, often at great personal sacrifice. This legislation provides them with a formal acknowledgment of their commitment and contributions to the nation.

THE WINELAND BUILDING, FOURTH FLOOR
16 FRANCIS STREET, ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

TOLL FREE: 866-793-1577 • ANNAPOLIS: 410-260-3838 • FAX: 410-216-7928

veterans.maryland.gov
TTY USERS CALL VIA MD RELAY

2. **Expanded Opportunities for Veterans:** A high school diploma is a fundamental credential that opens doors to employment, further education, and personal growth. SB 137 removes barriers for veterans, empowering them to pursue new opportunities and achieve their goals.
3. **Strengthened Community Connections:** Awarding high school diplomas to veterans fosters a stronger connection between these individuals and their communities. It demonstrates Maryland's gratitude for their service and reinforces the state's commitment to honoring their sacrifices.
4. **Inclusivity for All Veterans:** By extending eligibility to all veterans of armed conflicts authorized by the President or Congress, SB 137 ensures no group of veterans is excluded, reflecting Maryland's dedication to equity and fairness.

The DVMF strongly believes that SB 137 is a meaningful way to honor the military service of Maryland's veterans while helping them access the opportunities they deserve. This legislation aligns with our mission to support and advocate for Maryland's military-connected community, ensuring they receive the recognition and resources they have earned.

Thank you for your attention to this important proposal and I ask the committee for a favorable report.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Anthony Woods". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Anthony C. Woods
Secretary