

BRYAN W. SIMONAIRE
Legislative District 31
Anne Arundel County

Education, Energy, and the
Environment Committee

Joint Committee on the Chesapeake and
Atlantic Coastal Bays Critical Area



James Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street, Room 320
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-841-3658 · 301-858-3658
800-492-7122 Ext. 3658
Fax 410-841-3586 · 301-858-3586
Bryan.Simonaire@senate.state.md.us

The Senate of Maryland ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

SB 85 - Braille Flag Memorial Act of 2025

I am Senator Bryan Simonaire presenting SB 85.

I worked with the Department of Veterans and Military Families, the National Federation of the Blind, the military community and numerous other stakeholders on this consensus legislation.

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs estimates that there are approximately 130,000 blind veterans in the United States who are legally blind, and more than one million who have low vision that causes a loss of ability to perform necessary daily activities.

This "*Braille Flag Memorial Act*" honors the blind members of the Uniformed Services and other Marylanders, through the placement of an American Braille tactile flag in our state veterans' cemeteries.

This legislation is modeled after the Federal legislation that unanimously passed Congress to install a Braille Tactile Flag at the Arlington National Cemetery.

As you know, the General Assembly created five state veteran cemeteries to provide a final resting place for our veterans and their families, while also providing protocols associated with these sacred grounds.

This bill requires the *Secretary of the Department of Veterans and Military Families* to place an American Braille tactile flag in one or more of our State Veteran Cemeteries.

Additionally, it authorizes the Secretary to use the American braille tactile flag meaning:

- the Kansas Braille Transcription Institute's Braille tactile flag, or
- a flag designated by the Secretary.

The founder of the Kansas Braille Transcription Institute designed the American Braille Tactile Flag to honor his father who was a blind World War II veteran, and to allow all blind Americans and veterans to experience the American flag.

The Kansas Braille flag has been endorsed by the Blinded Veterans Association and is a beautiful way to honor our blind in Maryland.

The cost is minimal, but its significance is priceless.

The State of Maryland is known as a state that recognizes the great contributions of our blind community and honors the dedication of our service members and veterans, therefore this legislation is fitting and meaningful.

For all these reasons, I ask for your favorable consideration.