

Maryland Military Coalition SB0089 Written Testimo

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Position: FAV



MARYLAND MILITARY COALITION

Serving Veterans through Legislative Advocacy

January 24, 2025

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

Subject: Request for **FAVORABLE Report** – SB0089 – Department of the Environment – Notation of Veteran Status and Eligibility for Benefits

Dear Chair Feldman and distinguished members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee:

On behalf of the members of the Maryland Military Coalition (MMC), I write to recommend a **FAVORABLE report** by the Committee on *SB0089 – Department of the Environment – Notation of Veteran Status and Eligibility for Benefits*, sponsored by Senator Bryan Simonaire. This bill encourages the Department to establish a process to include a notation of veteran status on a license or certificate to assist in determining the eligibility of a veteran for State and federal veteran benefits. If the veteran agrees to have that notation applied, that individual also agrees to be contacted by appropriate Executive Branch agencies regarding their eligibility for State or federal veteran benefits.

The MMC supports the intent and processes of this bill. It **recognizes veteran status and reduces the burden on individuals to prove their eligibility for State or federal veteran benefits**, saving them personal time and effort to do so. We applaud this step in making it easier for those who have served other than dishonorably.

The Maryland Military Coalition **strongly supports SB0089** and asks for a **FAVORABLE** report from the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee.

The Maryland Military Coalition is a registered non-profit, non-partisan advocacy organization comprised of 22 prominent Maryland-based veteran and military groups. It represents over 150,000 service-connected individuals, including those currently serving, veterans, retirees and their families, caregivers and survivors. Visit our website at <https://mdmilcoalition.org/>.

We want to thank Senator Simonaire for sponsoring this legislation and supporting the uniformed services community in Maryland.

Respectfully,

David L. Dragics
COL (Ret), U.S. Army
Legislative Director



Member Organizations of the Maryland Military Coalition

Air Force Sergeants Association

American Military Society

American Minority Veterans Research Project

Association of the United States Navy

Commissioned Officers Association of the U.S. Public Health Service

Disabled American Veterans

Fleet Reserve Association of Annapolis

Jewish War Veterans of the U.S.A

Maryland Air National Guard Retirees' Association

National Active and Retired Federal Employees, Maryland Veterans

Maryland Veterans Chamber of Commerce

Military Officers Association of America

Military Order of the Purple Heart

Military Order of the World Wars

Montford Point Marines of America

National Association of Black Veterans

National Active and Retired Federal Employees, Maryland Veterans

Naval Enlisted Reserve Association

NOAA Association of Commissioned Officers

Platoon 22

Reserve Organization of America

Society of Military Widows

Veterans of Foreign Wars

Support for Maryland SB 89 - 22 Jan 2025.pdf

Uploaded by: David Heredia

Position: FAV



THE AMERICAN LEGION
Department of Maryland, Inc.

The War Memorial Building, Baltimore, Maryland 21202
410-752-1405

January 24, 2025

David Heredia, Jr.
Commander, Department of Maryland
The American Legion
101 N. Gay Street, Suite E
Baltimore, MD, 21202

The Honorable Bryan W. Simonaire
Maryland State Senate
11 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

The Honorable Michael A. Jackson
Maryland State Senate
11 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

cc: Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee Members

Subject: Strong Support for Maryland SB 89 – Honoring Veterans Through Professional License Recognition

Dear Senators Simonaire and Jackson,

On behalf of The American Legion Department of Maryland and our over 42,000 members who proudly support the nearly 350,000 veterans and their families across this great state, I write to express our unwavering and enthusiastic support for Senate Bill 89 (SB 89). This legislation, which authorizes professional licensing boards to include a veteran status notation on licenses and certificates, represents more than a procedural change—it is a bold and necessary acknowledgment of the sacrifices made by Maryland’s veterans.

For far too long, veterans have faced unnecessary barriers when seeking the recognition, resources, and respect they deserve. These are men and women who answered our nation’s call, often at great personal cost, and they continue to contribute to our communities as professionals, entrepreneurs, and leaders. Yet, many struggle to access benefits and resources simply because their status as veterans is not easily recognized.

This bill is not just about simplifying processes; it is about **honoring the identity of those who served** and ensuring their sacrifices are acknowledged in meaningful ways. Recognizing veteran status on professional licenses and certificates serves several critical purposes:

1. **Facilitating Access to Benefits:** Veterans shouldn’t have to jump through hoops to prove their service. A simple designation on a license provides immediate verification and ensures they are quickly connected to the benefits and services they have earned.

2. **Acknowledging Their Sacrifice:** For veterans, this notation is more than an administrative detail. It is a daily reminder to the professional community, clients, and colleagues that the individual holding this license has served their nation with honor.
3. **Enhancing Targeted Support:** By identifying veterans in licensed professions, Maryland can better understand their needs and develop policies and programs to provide them with the support they need to thrive.

As Commander of The American Legion Department of Maryland, I have spoken with countless veterans who feel overlooked or frustrated by the complexities of proving their status and accessing resources. SB 89 eliminates one of these barriers and shows Maryland's veterans that their service matters.

Our organization, along with other veteran service organizations like the DAV and VFW, works tirelessly to support veterans by providing free assistance through accredited Veteran Service Officers (VSOs). SB 89 will complement these efforts, making it easier for veterans to receive the care, recognition, and opportunities they have earned.

This legislation sends a clear and powerful message: Maryland honors its veterans, respects their contributions, and values their role in our professional communities. It's not just a policy change—it's a statement of gratitude.

We commend your leadership and dedication in sponsoring SB 89, and we urge the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee to pass this bill without hesitation. Maryland's veterans have already given so much—now it's time for us to step up for them.

Thank you for standing with our veterans. Together, we can ensure that Maryland continues to be a state that honors its heroes in both word and action.

Sincerely,

David Heredia Jr.

David Heredia, Jr.
Commander, Department of Maryland
The American Legion

cc: Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee Members

SB89_AARP_FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: James Campbell

Position: FAV



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SB89 Health Occupations Boards – Notation of Veteran Status and Eligibility for Benefits
Senate Education, Energy and the Environment Committee
Favorable
January 28, 2025

Good afternoon, Chairman Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan and members of the Senate Education, Energy and the Environment Committee. My name is Jim Campbell, President Emeritus for AARP Maryland, former Maryland State Delegate, and chair of AARP Maryland's Veterans' committee. AARP has four area of focus serving members of the military: caregiving, fighting fraud, helping with career and employment opportunities through the Veterans and Military Spouse Job Center, and access to benefits. AARP Maryland and its 850,000 members support SB67 and thank Senators Simonaire and Jackson for sponsoring this legislation.

What SB 89 Does

- SB89 authorizes the Department of the Environment where one or more boards under its control is required to create a process that provides a notation indicating veteran status on a license, or certificate, or registration upon application and consent of a veteran.
- Notation and consent of the notation provide a mechanism for appropriate Executive Branch Agencies to contact a Veteran with information regarding eligibility for State and Federal Veterans' benefits.
- Included in this process is the consent for information of Veterans status to be communicated with appropriate Executive Branch Agencies for the purpose of sharing information and outreach regarding Veterans' benefits.

Why This Matters

Veterans serve our country and people by putting their lives and livelihoods in jeopardy to protect and preserve our democracy and quality of life. As they transition to civilian life, many will be unable to work due to injuries sustained in the line of duty. In 2023, Maryland had approximately 348,459 veterans living in the state. Of those, 83,978 or 23.8% had a service-connected disability.

Broader Context – Service-Connected Disability Status

The Maryland Department of Veterans and Military Families 2022 Report states:

- According to the US Census, compared to civilian counterparts, veterans today are more likely to suffer from trauma-related injuries, substance abuse, and mental health disorders.
- Compared to veterans of other service eras, Post 9/11 veterans have a significantly higher chance (43%) of having a service-connected disability and to have a rating of 70% or higher (39%).

- According to the VA, in December 2022 Post 9/11 veteran claims made up 24% of the total inventory, Gulf War made up 36%, and combined Vietnam, peacetime, and other eras made up 44%.

Goals of the Maryland Department of Veterans and Military Families include;

- Increase outreach to women and other marginalized veteran populations to ensure they are aware of VA benefits, healthcare, and mental health services.
- Increase outreach to caregivers, spouses, and adult children of veterans to ensure they are aware of the VA Caregiver Support Program, Charlotte Hall Veterans Home, VA benefits, and other wellness resources.
- Diversify outreach to communities serving veterans to educate on VA benefits and healthcare and increase capacity to serve more veterans filing VA claims in response to the PACT Act.
- Strategically provide outreach to state agencies and local municipalities, especially in rural areas, encourage government and community organizations to screen for military service and to refer to MDVA and VA for benefits information.

In recognizing the sacrifices of veterans made for our country, AARP believes we must ensure that our veterans have the most efficient access to the benefits they are entitled to receive. SB89 will help achieve that goal and we urge a favorable report. Please feel free to contact Tammy Bresnahan, Senior Director of Advocacy at tbresnahan@aarp.org or by calling 410-302-8451.

SB 89 Senator Simonaire_FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Kara Contino

Position: FAV

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



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The Senate of Maryland ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

SB 89 - Environmental Licensure Veteran Designation

I am Senator Bryan Simonaire presenting SB 89.

I worked with the Department of Environment and the military community on this consensus legislation. It basically allows a veteran to put a 'Veteran notation' on their professional environmental license.

First, let me say this is enabling legislation for the department, and setups the framework if the Department implements it.

I have worked with the Department and flexibility is key to success and this bill provides that flexibility.

This bill does two main things:

- 1) Enables the Department to issue state identification cards with the "Veteran" notation placed on it, and
- 2) If enabled, it establishes an outreach to the veteran if they want the Veteran notation and the applicant consents to being contacted by appropriate Executive Branch agencies regarding the applicant's eligibility for State or federal veterans' benefits.

This may sound familiar as this is what is done for the MVA driver licenses. Driver license applicants can have a veteran's notation placed on their driver license and be contacted by the Department of Veterans and Military Families regarding available veteran benefits.

The only difference is that this legislation is enabling.

The advantage to this approach is the Department knows when and how quickly to roll it out. They could even do a pilot on a subset of their ID cards. This bill gives the Department tremendous flexibility to achieve success.

In fact, the Boards are in the process of transition to a new licensing system by mid-2026, so this is ideal to start planning and to be able to implement on their schedule.

While the MVA program has been hugely popular, Maryland has a long way to go to reach our veterans as less than 50% of our veteran population is taking advantage the MVA program.

That's why it is imperative we use as many methods as possible to reach out to our veterans. This legislation provides one more tool to reach out to veterans while also providing additional benefits to the veteran community.

Additionally, in Maryland, we are looking to do everything we can to help reduce veteran suicide. One of the key factors is avoiding isolation.

This legislation provides multiple benefits, including reducing isolation:

1. This will help with networking and reducing isolation as more people including other veterans will see these licensees are veterans and hopefully reach out more to them.
 - a. One of the many factors of veterans' suicide is isolation especially as it pertains to a veterans' own service and experiences. This will allow for public awareness of veterans through thanking them for their service, other veterans seeing it and talking with them and re-enforcing they are not alone.
2. It provides another tool to reach out to our veteran population with their consent through using their contact information to share eligible benefits with them,
3. It is another avenue for the public to show appreciation for their service, and
4. Lastly, it also provides potential financial benefits to our veteran as many customers are more likely to hire a veteran, repeat as a customer or just give a bigger tip for their service, where applicable.

If you think about it, you can't beat this is a low-cost investment with all its potential benefits.

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

MDE SB89 SUP.pdf

Uploaded by: Les Knapp

Position: FAV



**The Maryland Department of the Environment
Secretary Serena McIlwain**

Senate Bill 89

Department of the Environment – Notation of Veteran Status and Eligibility for Benefits

Position: Support
Committee: Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
Date: January 28, 2025
From: Jeremy D. Baker, Director of Government Relations

The Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) **SUPPORTS** SB 89.

Senate Bill 89 authorizes MDE’s occupational boards to include a notation of veteran status on professional licenses or certificates issued by MDE, and assist in determining the eligibility of veterans for state and federal benefits. The bill allows applicants for professional licenses or certificates to present documentation of their veteran status and consent to having their status noted on their license or certificate. It also permits sharing relevant information with executive branch agencies to evaluate veterans' benefit eligibility.

The bill would apply to the following MDE boards: (1) Board of Waterworks and Waste Systems Operators; (2) Board of Well Drillers; (3) Board of Marine Contractors; and (4) Board of On-Site Wastewater Professionals. The bill is authorizing only in recognition that there may be varying degrees of cost and implementation challenges depending on the specific board.

MDE supports efforts to acknowledge and assist our veterans. MDE also appreciates working with the bill sponsor to address potential costs and implementation concerns. Accordingly, MDE asks for a **FAVORABLE** report for SB 89.

Contact: Jeremy D. Baker, Director of Government Relations
Cell: 240-548-3321, Email: jeremy.baker@maryland.gov

DVMF SB 89 Support.pdf

Uploaded by: Morgan Murphy

Position: FAV



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

**WES MOORE
GOVERNOR**

**ARUNA MILLER
LT. GOVERNOR**

**ANTHONY C. WOODS
SECRETARY**

**Senate Bill 89 -Department of the Environment - Notation of Veteran Status and
Eligibility for Benefits
SUPPORT**

January 23, 2025

The Honorable Brian J. Feldman
Chair, 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 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 89 - Department of the Environment - Notation of Veteran Status and Eligibility for Benefits.

DVMF believes Senate Bill 89 provides a pathway to enhance recognition of veteran status on professional licenses and certificates and facilitates access to state and federal veterans benefits. DVMF is committed to supporting Maryland's military-connected community and SB 89 directly aligns with our mission to ensure that Maryland veterans have the resources, opportunities, and support they need to thrive in civilian life.

By enabling veterans to have their status recognized on professional licenses or certificates, SB 89 serves several vital purposes:

THE WINELAND BUILDING, FOURTH FLOOR
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veterans.maryland.gov
TTY USERS CALL VIA MD RELAY

1. **Streamlined Access to Benefits:** Many veterans are unaware of the benefits and resources available to them. This bill establishes an efficient mechanism for connecting veterans with the agencies that administer these critical services.
2. **Employment Opportunities:** Highlighting veteran status on professional credentials not only acknowledges their service but also showcases the unique skills and experiences veterans bring to the workforce, encouraging employers to hire from this talented pool of individuals.
3. **Statewide Coordination:** This Bill reflects Maryland's commitment to creating a coordinated and comprehensive support network for veterans. Collaboration between the Department of the Environment, DVMF, and other executive agencies will ensure timely outreach and benefit determination, fostering a culture of care and responsiveness.

As a state that prides itself on honoring and empowering those who have served, Maryland has the opportunity to lead the nation in innovative practices that support the successful reintegration of veterans into civilian life. SB 89 is a critical step toward achieving that goal.

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