

SB 137

Uploaded by: David Dragics

Position: FAV



MARYLAND MILITARY COALITION

Serving Veterans through Legislative Advocacy

January 29, 2025

The Honorable Brian Feldman
The Honorable Cheryl Kagan
Senate Education, Energy and the Environment Committee
2 West Miller Seate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Subject: **Request for FAVORABLE Report-SB0137** – Education – High School
Diplomas - Veterans of Armed Conflict

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

The Maryland Military Coalition recommends a **FAVORABLE report** by the Committee on SB0137 – Education – High School Diplomas – Veterans of Armed Conflict, sponsored by Senator Bryan W. Simonaire.

This bill would authorize the granting of a diploma to those individuals who left high school before graduating to enlist in the military during an armed conflict authorized by the President of the United States or Congress, and who were honorably discharged. This bill recognizes the service of those who set aside their education to serve during an armed conflict. Those service members who served honorably and returned to their community obtained training, valuable skills, and leadership opportunities while serving their country. They deserve a high school diploma that recognizes their sacrifice and service and will enable them to make potential future contributions to their communities.

The MMC **strongly supports SB0137** and asks the Committee for a **FAVORABLE report**.

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

We want to thank Senator Simonaire for his commitment to our veterans and the uniformed services community in Maryland.

Respectfully,

Jayson L. Spiegel
LTC, Army Reserve (Ret.)
President

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

Maryland National Association of Retired Federal Employees Veterans Committee

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

Naval Enlisted Reserve Association

NOAA Association of Commissioned Officers

Platoon 22

Reserve Organization of America

Society of Military Widows

Veterans of Foreign Wars

SB 137 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 137 – High School Diploma for Veterans

I am Senator Bryan Simonaire presenting SB 137.

Current law allows veterans who were in high school, left school to go to war and then come back can get a high school diploma if they entered the military during:

- World War II
- Korean Conflict or
- Vietnam Conflict.

I worked with the Department of Veterans and Military Families to expand that list to allow those in the Iraq/Afghanistan conflict to be eligible to get a High School diploma as well.

After discussions, we decided to instead of just adding one more conflict, to make it more generic so we do not have to come back every time there is a new conflict.

So, this bill allows a high school diploma to be given to a veteran, if there was an armed conflict that the President or Congress authorized the use of military force.

To obtain a high school diploma, the individual shall apply to the county board in the county where the individual resides or where the school from which the individual withdrew was located.

Each county board shall adopt rules and regulations to establish procedures for awarding diplomas under this section.

DVMF SB137 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 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.

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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

Support SB0137 LCH.pdf

Uploaded by: LaShonda Henderson

Position: FWA

Date: January 11, 2025

The Honorable Bryan W. Simonaire

320 James Senate Office Building

11 Bladen Street

Annapolis, MD 21401

Subject: Support for SB0137 – Education: High School Diploma for Veterans of Armed Conflicts

Dear Senator Simonaire,

I am writing to express my support for SB0137, *Education - High School Diploma - Veterans of Armed Conflicts*, which seeks to provide high school diplomas to veterans who have served honorably in the armed forces. This bill is a commendable initiative that acknowledges the sacrifices of our veterans and provides them with an important educational credential that can enhance their opportunities and dignity.

As a former correctional officer at our nation's only maximum-security military prison, I witnessed firsthand the profound impact of educational gaps on decision-making and overall life outcomes. Many of the individuals I encountered struggled with effective decision-making, and a lack of educational foundation often contributed to their challenges during and after their service.

While I strongly support this bill, I respectfully urge you to consider expanding its scope to include *all* veterans who served, regardless of the outcome of their military service. As someone who serves on the Education Committee, you know the transformative power of education—not just in creating opportunities but also in fostering mental and social well-being.

It is vital to recognize the diverse circumstances that lead individuals to enlist in the armed forces. Many veterans joined the military despite facing systemic or personal barriers to education. Expanding this opportunity to all veterans would acknowledge their willingness to serve and help address the inequalities they may have faced prior to their service and the challenges they might encounter after service.

This bill answers a threefold call:

1. It restores dignity to veterans by granting them the opportunity to achieve an essential educational milestone.
2. It highlights the universal importance of education as a tool for empowerment and opportunity.
3. It levels the playing field for all who choose to serve, ensuring their sacrifices are honored equally.

While military service is not for everyone, education should be. Expanding the scope of SB0137 will ensure that all veterans, regardless of their circumstances, are given the tools to succeed and thrive in civilian life.

Thank you for your leadership and commitment to improving the lives of Maryland's veterans. I look forward to your response and stand ready to support any efforts to further this important initiative.

Sincerely,

LaShonda C. Henderson
US Army Veteran
Camp Springs, Maryland
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