

2025 SB0085 Testimony For 2025-02-06.pdf

Uploaded by: Alan Lang

Position: FAV

SB0085 – Favorable

Honorable Senators

I support requiring the Department of Veterans and Military Families to designate a location for an American braille tactile flag to be placed on the grounds of one or more State veterans' cemeteries.

Please enter a favorable report for SB0085.

Alan Lang
45 Marys Mount Road
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Alanlang1@verizon.net

Legislative District 30B
February 6, 2025

MDOD_SB0085_FAV_02.06.25.pdf

Uploaded by: Anne Blackfield

Position: FAV

Carol A. Beatty, Secretary
Anne Blackfield, Deputy Secretary

Wes Moore, Governor
Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor



DATE: February 6, 2025
BILL: SB 85 – Braille Flag Memorial Act of 2025
COMMITTEE: Education, Energy, and the Environment
POSITION: Favorable

Dear Chair Feldman,

The Maryland Department of Disabilities (MDOD) is pleased to submit this letter of support for SB 85 - Braille Flag Memorial Act of 2025. This bill authorizes the Department of Veterans and Military Families to designate a location to install the American Braille Tactile flag at Maryland's veterans' cemeteries.

Maryland represents a nexus of employment, transportation, and housing opportunities for the 116,000 blind and low vision individuals who live here. Maryland is also home to military installations, blindness advocacy organizations, and veterans who served with distinction.

In 2008, Congress authorized placement of the American Braille Flag at Arlington National Cemetery as a tribute to blind veterans of all wars. Today, the American Braille flag is displayed at the National September 11 Memorial and several Veterans hospitals. The American Braille Tactile flag is an honor to display in recognition of the members of uniformed services, veterans, and others in Maryland who are blind or low vision.

I respectfully request a favorable report for this bill. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Carol A. Beatty".

Carol A. Beatty
Secretary



VeteransCaucusLegislationSupportLetter_SB85.pdf

Uploaded by: Benjamin Brooks

Position: FAV



MARYLAND GENERAL ASSEMBLY
VETERANS CAUCUS

February 4, 2025

Senator Brian Feldman, Chair
Education, Energy & the Environment Committee
2W Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: SB85, Braille Flag Memorial Act of 2025
Hearing Date: February 6, 2025

Dear Chairman Feldman,

Please let this letter serve as notice of the support of the Maryland General Assembly Senate Veterans Caucus for Senate Bill 85.

After review by our respective legislative committee, the Senate Veterans Caucus believes that the above-mentioned legislation would provide a valuable benefit to the veterans of the State of Maryland and requests a favorable report.

With kindest regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Benjamin F. Brooks".

Senator Benjamin Brooks
Senate Chair

cc: Senator Bryan Simonaire

SB 85

Uploaded by: Bruce Bereano

Position: FAV



Thomas D. Kohn
Executive Director and Counsel
Direct: 410.999.8344
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February 3, 2025

Senator Brian J. Feldman
Chairman of the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
2 West Miller Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: SB 085 - Braille Flag Memorial

Dear Chairman Feldman:

Thank you for the opportunity to enter this written testimony in support of Senate Bill 085 and the proposed Braille Flag Memorials to be placed at the State's veterans' cemeteries.

Blind Industries and Services of Maryland ("BISM") is the largest employer of blind and low vision individuals in the State of Maryland. Our mission is to support the blind and low vision community by providing stable and rewarding career opportunities, innovative rehabilitation programs, economic and personal independence, and appropriate resources for training and education.

As a proud partner with Maryland Works in the Maryland State Preferred Provider Program, BISM is keenly aware of the challenges and barriers faced by individuals with disabilities. We believe that every accommodation and increase in accessibility made available to these communities is a step in the right direction. A uniquely designed and made Braille flag is a valuable outreach to the blind community and will allow all - blind and sighted - to appreciate the American flag in a new and different way and show respect and concern for blind and low vision people.

If you have any questions or comments, please do not hesitate to communicate with me.

Sincerely,

Blind Industries and Services of Maryland

By: 

Thomas D. Kohn
Vice President and Counsel

Maryland Catholic Conference_FAV_SB85.pdf

Uploaded by: Diane Arias

Position: FAV



MARYLAND
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE

February 6, 2025

Senate Bill 85
Braille Flag Memorial Act of 2025
Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

Position: Favorable

The Maryland Catholic Conference (MCC) is the public policy representative of the three (arch)dioceses serving Maryland, which together encompass over one million Marylanders. Statewide, their parishes, schools, hospitals, and numerous charities combine to form our state's second largest social service provider network, behind only our state government.

Senate Bill 85 requires the Department of Veterans and Military Families to designate a location for an American braille tactile flag to be placed on the grounds of one or more State veterans' cemeteries.

A Braille flag in a cemetery is a meaningful and inclusive tribute, providing blind veterans and individuals with a tactile way to experience the American flag. This allows them to engage with a powerful national symbol through touch, fostering a sense of connection, dignity, and patriotism. For many blind individuals, physical interaction is essential in interpreting the world, and a Braille flag ensures they are not excluded from honoring their country and fallen heroes. Beyond its significance to the blind community, the presence of a Braille flag serves as a powerful reminder to sighted individuals of the importance of accessibility and inclusion. It symbolizes a nation's commitment to honoring all individuals, regardless of ability, and encourages greater understanding and awareness of the experiences of blind veterans and citizens.¹

Incorporating Braille into a patriotic symbol reinforces the message that service and sacrifice are not defined by physical ability and that every individual deserves recognition and respect. Placing a Braille flag in a cemetery ensures that future generations understand and appreciate the diverse ways people experience and honor their country. It is our responsibility to affirm that individuals who are visually impaired are active, valued, and vital members of our communities—beloved children of God who contribute meaningfully to society.² The Braille flag

¹ <https://www.abfp.us/>

² <https://capp-usa.org/fratelli-tutti/>

stands as a testament to the core values of equality, respect, and unity—principles that are fundamental to our nation’s identity.

For these reasons, the Maryland Catholic Conference asks for a favorable report on **SB 85**.

Thank you for your consideration.

SB 85 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 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.

DVMF SB85 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 85 - Braille Flag Memorial Act of 2025
SUPPORT**

February 3, 2025

The Honorable Brian J. Feldman
Chair, Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
Room 241, 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 85 - the Braille Flag Memorial Act of 2025. This demonstrates Maryland's commitment to accessibility, inclusivity, and honoring the sacrifices of our nation's blind and visually impaired veterans.

This is particularly important as the Department estimates that more than 130,000 veterans in the United States are legally blind, with over a million experiencing low vision that affects daily living. Senate Bill 85 ensures that these veterans, along with other visually impaired individuals in our state, have a meaningful way to experience and connect with the American flag—a cherished symbol of service, sacrifice, and unity.

By requiring the Department of Veteran and Military Families to designate a location for an American braille tactile flag at one or more of Maryland's state veterans' cemeteries, this legislation achieves the following:

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

1. **Enhances Accessibility and Inclusion** – The installation of a braille tactile flag ensures that blind and visually impaired veterans can physically experience the American flag, fostering a deeper sense of connection and belonging.
2. **Honors the Service of All Veterans** – Maryland is home to thousands of veterans, including those who are blind or visually impaired due to combat injuries, aging, or medical conditions. This initiative recognizes their contributions and ensures they are fully included in Maryland’s veteran memorials.
3. **Strengthens Maryland’s Commitment to Veterans** – As a state known for its dedication to military service members, veterans, and their families, Maryland continues to lead by example in supporting and recognizing the diverse needs of our veteran community.

The placement of a braille flag in state veterans’ cemeteries represents a powerful and lasting tribute, reinforcing the principle that every veteran deserves to be honored in a way that is meaningful and accessible to them.

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 style with a large initial "A" and "W".

Anthony C. Woods
Secretary

SB 85

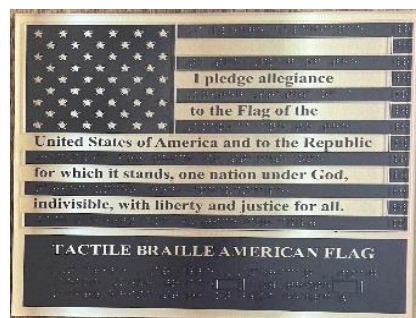
Uploaded by: Paul Kaminsky

Position: FAV

Raising the Flag, that all may see Including the blind.



This graphic depicts the Flash Bronze American Braille Flag. The tactile figures in the upper left are the stars, each of which represents the 50 states and are arranged in nine rows in alternating clusters of six and five. The long smooth horizontal lines represent the red stripes. The end of each stripe is embossed with the Braille dots 4, 5, 6 followed by the lower case "r", indicating the color red. Between each of the representations of the red stripes are the long raised textured areas representing the white stripes. The end of each stripe is embossed with the Braille dots 4, 5 9 6 followed by the lower case "w", indicating the color white. As should be, there are a total of thirteen stripes which represent the original thirteen American colonies of England which became the original thirteen states of the new independent Republic. The pledge of allegiance is embossed in standard font English literary Braille code over the smooth red stripes. This graphic not only serves those Americans who have become blind, but equally serves as a teaching/learning tactile aid for instructing blind students how the American flag appears to the sighted. The flag is well sized for portability (13.25" by 12" and weighs 7.5 lbs), and is easily distributed as demonstration pieces at a conference, work shop, or seminar. Additional variations are now available in non-Bronze material. Each variation is tactile like the original Bronze-Flag.





HISTORY:

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 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 of 2008 the Braille flag was officially installed at the cemetery representing a Braille replica of the U.S. American Flag. literally thousands have found their way into the hands and hearts of many sighted and blind civilians, veteran's, veteran's hospitals, memorials parks, offices of elected officials, schools for the blind, and many other places. The Blinded Veterans Association and the American Braille flag Project has given hundreds of framed Braille flags as appreciation awards to blind veterans not only to American Veterans but also to blind veterans in other countries.

The Tactile Braille Flag has been placed in many National Cemeteries Historical sites such as Ground Zero in New York, Flight 93 Memorial, disability Deaf and Blind schools and in many VA facilities.

The American Braille Flag Project goal is to place Tactile Braille Flags and allow the blind to be able to see with the touch of their finger the American Flag. The Project is run by two legally blind retired veterans Service connected.

American Braille Flag Project, Inc.
RAISING THE FLAG FOR ALL TO SEE.
Walter Peters SFC USA-Ret
wpeterss@aol.com
President

Walt Peters spent 20 years in the Army, 1962-1983. He retired as a Staff sergeant. As a special operations aviator in Vietnam, he compiled three tours of duty in that country. His service to his country came with a huge cost to his own wellbeing. he was doused with Agent Orange three or four times” during those tours. Agent Orange has left many service members with long lasting disabling effects. Around 1997 his eyesight started going and he was diagnosed with chemical diabetes and has had some 30 surgeries. As such he can only see silhouettes. Walt has dedicated himself to the American Braille Flag Project hoping to Raise the American Braille Flag for All to See, Including the Blind.

American Braille Flag Project, Inc.
RAISING THE FLAG FOR ALL TO SEE
Paul Kaminsky, Sr Cdr USN-Ret
pkjax47@gmail.com
Chief Executive Officer

Paul Kaminsky retired from the U.S. Navy after serving 30 years, 1965-1995. He held Enlisted paygrades E-1 to E-9 (AVCM) and Officer ranks O-1 to O-5 (Commander). He flew with the Navy Hurricane Hunters, served with Navy fighter squadrons onboard the USS Independence, USS America, and the USS Theodore Roosevelt. Kaminsky began losing his eyesight in 1982, by 1985 was legally blind. His last 10 years, in the Navy, he was legally blind but because of his ability to perform all his duties he remained classified as fit for full duty and continued on active duty with the rest of his contemporaries. Kaminsky is dedicated to the American Braille Flag Project and too with the Project's goal, to make this Braille Flag available throughout the Nation.



MWE SB 85 FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Rev. Ray Raysor

Position: FAV



**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](mailto:collins@policypartners.net).