

**2025 SB0282 Testimony For 2025-03-26.pdf**

Uploaded by: Alan Lang

Position: FAV

# Testimony For SB0282

Honorable Delegates

Pleased enter a favorable report for SB0282.

I support

- Establishing rules of interpretation related to the uniformed services;
- altering the rule of interpretation for 'veteran';
- altering the application of certain provisions of law governing public health and the regulation of health occupations to apply to all uniformed services, rather than only the armed forces; and
- altering the circumstances under which licenses for fishing in tidal waters do not lapse.

I believe all those in the uniformed services should receive the same benefits as armed forces veterans.

Please enter a favorable report with amendment for SB0785.

Alan Lang  
45 Marys Mount Road  
Harwood, Maryland 20776  
Legislative District 30B  
410-336-9745  
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March 26, 2025

**VeteransCaucusLegislationSupportLetter\_SB282.pdf**

Uploaded by: Benjamin Brooks

Position: FAV



MARYLAND GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
VETERANS CAUCUS

March 24, 2025

Delegate Korman, Chair  
Environment and Transportation Committee  
250-251 House Office Building  
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: SB282, Recreational Equality for Service Members Act  
Hearing Date: March 26, 2025

Dear Chair, Korman,

Please let this letter serve as notice of the support of the Maryland General Assembly Senate Veterans Caucus for Senate Bill 282.

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 T. Brooks".

Senator Benjamin Brooks  
Senate Chair

cc: Senator Simonaire

# **Maryland Military Coalition SB0282 Environment & T**

Uploaded by: DAVID Dragics

Position: FAV



## MARYLAND MILITARY COALITION

*Serving Veterans through Legislative Advocacy*

March 24, 2025

The Honorable Marc Korman  
Chair, Environment and Transportation Committee  
250 Taylor House Office Building  
Annapolis, MD 21401

Subject: Request for **FAVORABLE Report** – SB0282 – Recreational Equality for Service Members Act

Dear Chair Korman and distinguished members of the Environment and Transportation Committee:

On behalf of the members of the Maryland Military Coalition (MMC), I write to recommend a **FAVORABLE report** by the Committee on **SB0282 – Recreational Equality for Service Members Act**, sponsored by Senator Bryan Simonaire. This bill will update and change the application of certain provisions of law governing natural resources to apply to all uniformed services rather than only the armed forces.

This bill is a **positive step in making the Maryland Code consistent with U.S. Code in the use of terms related to the uniform services**, which the MMC endorses. Making the Maryland Code consistent with the U.S. Code for key terms related to the uniformed services without changing policy will decrease their misuse in future legislation and policymaking.

The Maryland Military Coalition **strongly supports SB0282** and asks for a **FAVORABLE report** from the Environment and Transportation 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

**SB0282 Simonaire- House 03202025.pdf**

Uploaded by: Joan Hunter

Position: FAV



March 20, 2025

Senator Bryan W. Simonaire  
James Senate Office Building, Room 320  
11 Bladen Street  
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Senator Simonaire,

This letter is to strongly urge the support and passage of SB0282; Recreational Equality for Service Members Act in the House Hearing next week. This important proposed legislation will ensure the inclusion of all uniformed services as part of establishing rules of interpretation for "veteran" for Maryland residents.

The United States Public Health Service (USPHS) Commissioned Corps was established in 1889 as a cadre of uniformed service members dedicated to serving sick and injured seamen as part of the Marine Hospital Service. Today it is a cadre of approximately 6000 trained, non-armed health professionals within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services with a mission: "...to protect, promote and advance the health and safety of our Nation." Currently the USPHS includes physicians, nurses, dentists, veterinarians, scientists and engineers who respond to the health needs of our citizens in national emergencies, they conduct medical and behavioral health research, they protect our citizens against unsafe products and provide direct healthcare to underserved communities.

As a retired Rear Admiral in the USPHS, I know the value our officers provide to our nation's citizens. Similar to other uniformed Services, USPHS officers: take the same oath of office as our Armed Service members, earn the same military rank (U.S. Navy) and pay rates, earn the same retirement pay and benefits, are covered by the GI Bill, are eligible for TRICARE military health care system and earn the same benefits and care offered by the Veterans Administration to other Service members.

In addition, the USPHS officers are ready to deploy to national emergencies, pandemics, and national disasters in order to provide clinical care, expertise and management to affected citizens. We have the same ethical standards and professional conduct as our "sister services", and are required to successfully train and maintain proficiency and readiness for deployment.

It is without hesitation I support and thank you for your effort to recognize the need for equality among all eight of our Nation's Uniformed Services.

Sincerely,



RADM (ret) Joan Hunter, USPHS  
3678 Bay Drive  
Edgewater, MD 21037

**SB 282 Senator Simonaire\_FAV\_ENT.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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Bryan.Simonaire@senate.state.md.us

*The Senate of Maryland*  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

## **SB 282 - " Recreational Equality for Servicemembers Act "**

I am Senator Bryan Simonaire presenting SB 282.

I am very excited to be presenting a package of bills that represents the most comprehensive overhaul of military law in our state's modern history.

The package consists of 8 bills:

At the core is SB 275 - Modernization of Military Laws Act

Along with 7 other bills covering all of Maryland Laws

I have worked directly with the Uniformed Services, military advocates, federal and state agencies, military legal experts and our DLS legal counsel to draft a consensus and workable solution.

This being the first bill hearing of the package I wanted to give you an overview of what the package does:

1. Completely restructures Maryland's military law into the 21st century with modernized and standardized terms that are also strategically centralized in one location
2. Establishes consistent and equal benefits among all 8 Uniformed Services branches and reserve units, and
3. Authorizes the Department of Veterans and Military Families to provide support to our service members, in addition to our veterans.

The advantages are namely:

1. Updates current laws to provide over 100 additional benefits that were being denied to various former and current service members simply because of inconsistent and outdated terminology.
2. Creates a centralized structure that facilitates easy, consistent and standard military laws for future revisions.
3. Codifies the Department's authority and duty to support the service members.

To get an idea of the magnitude of this package, every legislator received a memo this past November from the Department of Veterans and Military Families highlighting 34 sections in our laws with inconsistencies in military terminology.

In contrast, this comprehensive legislative package updates more than 230 sections with over 500 revisions touching nearly every article.

But first a brief refresher on terms so my presentation makes sense:

The term 'Uniformed Services' is comprised of 8 federal branches.

There are 6 military branches of the Uniformed Services (~ 1.3 million active duty):

Referred to as the 'Armed forces':

Air Force, Army, Coast Guard, Marines, Navy and Space Force

There are 2 non-military branches of the Uniformed Services (~6,000 active duty nationwide)

- Commissioned Corps Officers of the Public Health Services (PHS)
- Commissioned Corps Officers of the National Oceanic Atmospheric and Administration (NOAA)

I am sure we are all familiar with what our military branches do, but some may not realize what the other non-military branches do to protect our nation.

I won't discuss all PHS and NOAA responsibilities, but I will highlight a few tasks.

PHS sent hundreds of officers over to Afghanistan to assist during the war. Additionally, they were sent over to Africa to help when there was an Ebola outbreak to contain it.

NOAA is involved in almost every mission performed by our military through its coordination of their satellites and weather capabilities. Additionally, you may not know that NOAA was in the Gulf helping sweep for mines during the war.

And that brings me to SB 282. which improves the Natural Resources Article by updating the uniformed services term to be inclusive of all 8 branches in areas, such as:

1. Healing Hunting and Fishing Program privileges applies to all service members,
2. Exemption for annual fishing licenses for service members with a physical or mental disability applies to all service members,
3. Providing the same benefits to all service members for a fishing license renewal or expiration during an emergency,

4. Chesapeake Bay and coastal sport fishing license exemption for service members on leave in the state applies to all service members,
5. Codify the Veterans and Active Duty Servicemembers free state park passes and extending it to Uniformed Services members as well, and
6. Provide clarity in military definitions.

Lastly, I would note that in general, these bills are not changing the underlying policy but providing equality among our service members. And worked very hard to keep the fiscal note to zero or within all the Department's current budget.

I could go into much greater depth but will stop there and say, "For all these reasons, I ask for your favorable consideration."

# **Ches Bay Trust Testimony - SB282-HouseENT.pdf**

Uploaded by: Jana Davis

Position: INFO



## Senate Bill 282 Recreational Equality for Service Members Act Written Testimony

**Date: March 26, 2025**

**Submitted to:** Environment and Transportation Committee

**Submitted by:** Jana Davis, Chesapeake Bay Trust

The Chesapeake Bay Trust is honored to administer funds contributed to the Healing Hunting and Fishing Fund, which is supported by individuals purchasing boating, fishing, or hunting licenses/registrations who optionally donate to the Fund at the time of their transaction. The Trust then distributes the funds through our Veterans Outdoor Engagement Grant Program to organizations that benefit veterans for projects like recreational and/or therapeutic outdoor activities or green job workforce training (<https://cbtrust.org/grants/veterans-engagement/>; see Figure 1 below).

This bill would expand the number of groups and individuals who could be served by this program, and the Trust is poised to provide resources to an expanded audience. There is significant research indicating that being outdoors promotes healing in individuals recovering from physical and mental trauma or health issues.

Projects specifically focused on veterans we have funded in the past include TALMAR Gardens & Horticultural Therapy's veterans-to-farmers initiative, "Breaking New Ground," a 10-month farmer's training providing the skills for employment in agriculture and Talisman Therapeutic Riding's "Talisman TheraBay Trails" program to support their veterans therapeutic programs and annual Veteran's Victory Garden, and many more (see Table 1 below).

### Figure 1: Chesapeake Bay Trust's Veterans Program

<https://cbtrust.org/veterans/>



#### The Veterans Engagement Mini Grant Program

The Chesapeake Bay Trust recently released the [Veteran's Engagement Mini Grant Program](#). This program is designed to support veteran's groups and organizations engaging veteran's groups as they provide healing and therapeutic services, outdoor recreation, community engagement, and green jobs training. This program funds activities such as outdoor meditation, adaptive camping, therapeutic green spaces, or stipends for green jobs and training. To see a longer list of potential projects, review evaluation criteria, and learn more about the application process, read the full Request for Proposals (RFP).

<https://cbtrust.org/grants/veterans-engagement/>

## Veteran's Engagement Mini Grant Program

The Veteran's Engagement Mini Grant Program is designed to support veteran's groups and organizations engaging veteran's groups as they provide healing and therapeutic services, outdoor recreation, community engagement, and green jobs training.

**What this funds:** Activities such as outdoor meditation, adaptive camping, therapeutic green spaces, or stipends for green jobs and training. To see a longer list of potential projects, read the full Request for Proposals (RFP). Please note the RFP is updated every year.

**Who can apply:** Veterans' groups and organizations serving veterans groups. Applications are particularly encouraged from organizations who have never received a grant from the Trust. Organizations must be either a non-profit organization or a municipal, county, regional, state, or federal agency.

**How much can be awarded:** Up to \$5,000.

**Is match required?** Match is encouraged, but not required.

**Grant Application Process:** The Chesapeake Bay Trust's grant applications are all submitted through an online system, using the "Start a New Application" button below. If you have questions regarding the application process, please contact this program's grant manager, Craig Freeland, at 410-974-2941 ext. 103 or at cfreeland@citrust.org.

### Program Status: **OPEN**

[View RFP](#)

**Deadline:** Rolling basis. Requests for this Mini Grant Program are accepted on an on-going basis until funds are fully expended for the fiscal year.

### Mentorship Opportunity

Available to new applicants to provide support during project development and application submission.

[Mentorship Program](#)

### Start A New Application

[New Grant](#)

## Healing, Hunting and Fishing Fund

Calling all veterans! The Trust is honored to play a role in administering funds contributed to the Healing, Hunting and Fishing Fund. Through this process, hunters and anglers who obtain licenses online through the Maryland Department of Natural Resources' (DNR) Compass registration system can choose to make a contribution to support the Fund.

Contributions will be directed to the Chesapeake Bay Trust. The Trust will distribute the funds through competitive grants to nonprofits, and will support such activities as therapeutic outdoor activities, outdoor recreational activities such as hunting or fishing, or workforce development for green jobs.



There is significant research that indicates that being outdoors promotes healing in individuals recovering from physical and mental trauma or health issues. For these benefits to be realized, two things need to happen. First, more individuals need to recognize the value of time spent outdoors or otherwise engaging with nature on their physical and mental health. Second, we need to make sure that there are healthy spaces for people to use for human health benefits. The Trust is committed to helping realize these benefits through the Healing, Hunting, and Fishing Fund.



**The Trust has funded multiple human health-related outdoor therapeutic projects, including healing gardens at hospitals and planting projects for facilities that support individuals with disabilities. Below are grants that were funded in support of veteran projects.**



**Table 1: Examples of Veterans-related projects funded by/through the Chesapeake Bay Trust**

**TALMAR Gardens & Horticultural Therapy Center**, for the installation of accessible agricultural features by and for veterans, Baltimore County, \$5,000

**Catfish for Heroes**, for Rockfish fishing trips for veterans and first responders, Upper Bay, \$4,948

**Cheverly American Legion Post 108**, for invasive species removal and the creation of a green space for veterans to connect, Prince George's County, \$4,328

**Friends of the Patapsco Valley State Park**, for camping supplies to increase the accessibility for disabled veterans to the Hilton and Hollofield campsites, Howard and Baltimore Counties, \$4,988

**Audubon Naturalist Society of the Central Atlantic States, Inc.**, for green jobs training, environmental education, and healing for 75 veterans, Montgomery County, \$4,999

**Warrior Canine Connection**, for an outdoor obstacle course event at Seneca Street State Park hosted for 50 veterans and their service dogs, Montgomery County, \$4,500

**God's Outdoor Angels Foundation**, for costs of 4 charter fishing trips and guided hunting trips for 10 disabled veterans, statewide, \$5,000

**Preservation Trust of Wicomico, Inc.**, for a nature trail to commemorate Buffalo Soldier history, Wicomico County, \$5,000

**Friends of the Patapsco Valley State Park**, for an adaptive recreational hand-crank cycling program for veterans, partnering with the MD DNR Wounded Warrior and Veteran Outreach program, Howard and Baltimore Counties, \$24,000

**Audubon Naturalist Society of the Central Atlantic States, Inc.**, for experiences in nature for veterans through community environmental education programs along a wheelchair-accessible, streamside nature trail at 40-acre Woodend Nature Sanctuary, Montgomery County, \$10,126

**TALMAR Gardens & Horticultural Therapy Center**, for the implementation of the "Breaking New Ground" program, a veterans-to-farmers initiative, Baltimore County, \$15,000

**Talisman Therapeutic Riding, Inc.**, for the "Talisman TheraBay Trails" program to incorporate watershed education curriculum into their seven year-round programs, summer camp initiative, volunteer training materials, and annual Veteran's Victory Garden, Queen Anne's County, \$9,550

**About the Chesapeake Bay Trust**

The Trust was created by the Maryland General Assembly in 1985 as a nonprofit grant-making organization with a goal to increase stewardship and engagement in the restoration of the state's local rivers, streams, parks, and other natural resources in diverse communities across the state, from the mountains of Western Maryland and the Youghiogheny watershed to the marshes of the Coastal Bays.

The goal was to create an entity that could complement state agency work with groups on the ground: schools, nonprofit organizations, faith-based and reach large institutions, homeowners associations, community and civic associations, and other types of groups.

The Trust invests in local communities and watersheds through grant programs and special initiatives and is known for its efficiency, putting on average 90 cents of every dollar into programs. The Trust has awarded over \$200 million through more than 12,500 grants and projects in every county in Maryland since 1985 ([www.cbtrust.org/impact](http://www.cbtrust.org/impact)). We make about 450 grants and other awards a year and have about 1,000 active grantees at any one time.

The Trust does not receive a direct state appropriation to support its operations, instead supported through revenue from the Chesapeake Bay vehicle license plate; half of the Chesapeake and Endangered Species Fund checkoff on the state income tax form; two donation options through Maryland's online boating, fishing, hunting license system, one that focuses on veterans' rehabilitation; partnerships with federal, state, local agencies, family foundations, and corporate foundations; and individual donors.

Due to its efficiency, the Trust has been rated with the maximum four-star rating by the nation's leading charity evaluator, Charity Navigator, for more than two decades, putting it in the top 1% of non-profits in the nation.

One of the Trust's basic tenets in its strategic plan is to a wide range of audiences in natural resources issues, and that theme characterizes all the Trust's programs. Every individual in our area benefits from healthy natural resources, and in turn, every individual can help natural resources.