



**March 25, 2025**

**Senate Bill 309**

**Department of Veterans and Military Families - Communications, Outreach, and  
Advocacy Program – Alterations  
House Health and Government Operations 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 309** requires the Communications, Outreach, and Advocacy Program in the Department of Veterans and Military Families to expand certain services to include service members and their families; and requiring the Secretary of Veterans and Military Families to submit an annual report by December 1 each year to the Governor and the General Assembly that includes a general assessment of communication methods utilized in support of the Communications, Outreach, and Advocacy Program.

Military service members and their families deserve seamless access to the benefits and services designed to support them. This legislation ensures that service members and their families are aware of the programs available to them in the state. These services—including education, employment, healthcare, unemployment assistance, and recreational programs—are specifically designed to address the unique challenges faced by those who serve. Given the shared experiences and sacrifices of military life, ensuring clear communication and annual reporting of these services would strengthen community support and ensure that service members receive the assistance they deserve.

The Maryland Department of Veterans and Military Families already provides Veterans Benefits Specialists to assist service members and their families in navigating federal, state, and local benefits.<sup>1</sup> As Pope Francis has stated, *"If they carry out their duty honorably, they truly*

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<sup>1</sup> <https://myarmybenefits.us.army.mil/Benefit-Library/State/Territory-Benefits/Maryland#:~:text=Summary%20of%20Maryland%20Military%20and,are%20provided%20free%20of%20charge.>

*contribute to the common good of the nation and the maintenance of peace.”*<sup>2</sup> Supporting this legislation affirms the dignity of our service members and honors their sacrifices in protecting our freedoms—including our freedom of faith. By improving communication and access to essential benefits, we uphold our commitment to those who have selflessly served our country.

For these reasons, the Maryland Catholic Conference asks for a favorable report on **SB 309**.

Thank you for your consideration.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.usccb.org/news/2025/pope-vocation-military-and-police-defend-life-peace-justice>