

Subject: Favorable for SB85: requiring Maryland veteran's cemeteries to have braille flags

Date: March 18th, 2025

From: National Federation of the Blind of Maryland

15 Charles Plaza, #3002

President@nfbmd.org

To: House Health and Government Operations Committee

The members of the National Federation of the Blind of Maryland urge the House Health and Government Operations Committee to vote favorably on SB85, a bill that will require Maryland veteran cemeteries to have braille flags.

The American Flag plays an important part in honoring our veterans. The American Flag adorns the casket at burial of the veteran, and it is given to the veteran's next of kin. Until very recently, blind people could not experience the full dimensions of the flag presentation experience.

The privilege of receiving a free burial flag for all veterans was established in the U.S by an Act of Congress on July 3, 1930. The blind were not considered during these ceremonies.

The participation of blind people in a veteran's burial ceremony has been limited because of a lack of accessibility. Braille was available in the 20th century but there was no way for a blind person to experience the actual flag. Tactile graphics with braille have been developed in the 21st century. This technology can make the experience of the American flag in ceremonies to honor veterans more meaningful and accessible to blind persons.

It is time to make these ceremonies inclusive for all, including the blind. Please vote in favor of SB85.

