



MARYLAND MILITARY COALITION

Serving Veterans through Legislative Advocacy

March 14, 2025

The Honorable Joseline A. Pena-Melnyk
Chair, Health and Government Operations Committee
240 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Subject: Request for **FAVORABLE Report** – SB0182 – Maryland Veterans Service Animal Program – Eligibility – Family Members of Veterans

Dear Chair Pena-Melnyk and distinguished members of the Health and Government Operations Committee:

On behalf of the members of the Maryland Military Coalition (MMC), I write to recommend a **FAVORABLE report** by the Committee on **SB0182 – Maryland Veterans Service Animal Program – Eligibility – Family Members of Veterans**, sponsored by Senator Bryan Simonaire. This bill would expand the eligibility for this program to include a spouse or dependent of an eligible veteran.

Treatment or care from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs or a Department of Defense (DoD) medical facility involves not only the veteran but also the veteran's family, that individual's primary support group that cares the most. This bill does not change the State's policy; it only expands the policy to eligible family members, who should be involved with and will benefit from any treatment from the Maryland Veterans Service Animal Program.

The Maryland Military Coalition **strongly supports SB0182** and asks for a **FAVORABLE report** from the Health and Government Operations Committee. We requested the same report from the Education, Energy, and the Environment 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

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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