



## HOWARD COUNTY OFFICE OF COUNTY EXECUTIVE

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March 26, 2025

Delegate Vanessa E. Atterbeary, Chair  
Health and Government Operations Committee  
131 Taylor House Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: **TESTIMONY OF SUPPORT**: SB 276 - Educational Equality for Service Members Act

Dear Chair Atterbeary, Vice Chair Wilkins, and Members of the Ways and Means Committee,

I commend the introduction of Senate Bill 276, which will ensure provisions of law governing education apply to all uniformed services, including commissioned corps officers of the Public Health Services and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, rather than only armed forces.

In recent months, the importance of service has taken on a renewed importance in our nation. Across the federal government thousands of dedicated public servants, including veterans and commissioned corps officers, are at risk of losing their jobs and financial stability despite glowing performance in the workplace. These issues, while not unique to Maryland, speak to the importance of adequately defining and determining where and to whom our resources and support programs are available to.

On a national level, commissioned corps officers are considered veterans by the Department of Veteran's Affairs (VA), and eligible for the benefits that provides, including the VA Loan Guaranty Home Loan Program, disability benefits, and survival and death benefits. These benefits are extended to commissioned corps officers because of the important work they do on home soil and overseas to keep our nation and our active-duty service members safe. Yet under Maryland law, many benefits, including those related to education, are currently limited to the armed forces. On a local level, Howard County is home to more than 20,000 veterans and active duty service members. Our Office of Veterans and Military Families (OVMF) works every day to provide guidance, information and access to these individuals, their dependents, and survivors through a "No Wrong Door" policy. We are proud to offer resources that help these individuals identify scams, find disability and caregiver services, housing, and childcare.

In recognizing the importance of the work of commissioned corps officers, we must recognize the importance in bringing Maryland law and support for these officers in line with what the VA already practices. For these reasons, I strongly encourage a favorable report on Senate Bill 276.

All the Best,

Calvin Ball  
Howard County Executive