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**SB 215 – Veterans and Uniformed Services –
Maryland Veterans Trust Fund and Application of Laws
Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
February 12, 2026
FAVORABLE**

Good afternoon, Chair, Vice Chair, and members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 215. My name is Jim Campbell, president emeritus for AARP Maryland, chair of the AARP Maryland Veterans Committee, and a former state delegate.

AARP Maryland represents more than 850,000 members statewide and is the largest nonprofit, nonpartisan organization advocating for Marylanders age 50 and over and their families. We thank Senator Simonaire for sponsoring this legislation.

AARP has four areas of focus in serving military families, including fighting fraud, helping with career and employment opportunities through the Military Service Job Center, caregiving, and access to benefits.

What does SB 215 do?

Senate Bill 215 modernizes and harmonizes Maryland law to ensure that all uniformed services members—not just traditional armed forces members—receive consistent protections, benefits, and recognition. The bill clarifies definitions and expands eligibility for contributions to the Maryland Veterans Trust Fund.

SB 215 is a technical yet meaningful step toward equitable treatment of all who serve.

How will it help veterans?

SB 215 ensures equal treatment across all uniformed services. Service members today come from a broad range of federal and state uniformed services, including the U.S. Public Health Service and NOAA Corps. Many Maryland statutes refer only to “armed forces” or “military,” leaving out individuals who serve in equally demanding and essential roles.

SB 215 closes those gaps, ensuring that laws on housing, local government employment, natural resources, and judiciary processes apply consistently.

SB 215 also strengthens the Maryland Veterans Trust Fund by including fees from non-combat-related uniformed services medals of the highest levels. This broadens the

community eligible for specialty plates and increases voluntary contributions, thereby creating additional resources for veterans in need of assistance.

At its core, the bill recognizes that all service members deserve consistent protections and opportunities.

Conclusion

Senate Bill 215 strengthens Maryland's commitment to uniformed services members and veterans. By correcting outdated statutory language and creating uniform definitions, the bill improves fairness, clarity, and support across state law.

We urge a favorable report on SB 215.

If you have any questions, please contact Sara Westrick, AARP Maryland Advocacy Director, at swestrick@aarp.org or by calling 410-310-0374.