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SB 142 - MMD – National Guard – Tuition Assistance

Good afternoon, Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 142, MMD-National Guard- Tuition Assistance.

SB 142 aligns with the priorities of the Moore-Miller Administration, creating an Equitable, Robust, and Competitive Economy through providing access to vocational equipment that will have the following positive impacts:

- Reducing Maryland’s underemployment rate
- Improve labor force participation
- And Enhance financial readiness of soldiers, airmen and their families.

The statutory change would enable the Maryland Military Department (MMD) to support Servicemembers by reimbursing career-related overhead expenses. Specifically, reimbursing Servicemembers directly for approved costs incurred while enrolled in state-certified apprenticeship programs, including personal protective equipment (PPE), tools, certification or licensing fees, and trade-required equipment and materials.

SB 142 also allows for the use of existing State Tuition Assistance Reimbursement (STAR) education funding to directly support Maryland National Guard (MDNG) Servicemembers pursuing state-certified apprenticeship programs.

MMD recognizes that access to high-quality equipment, tools, and technology is essential to effective vocational training. This change to the Maryland STAR Education Program will help to:

- Provide equitable access to equipment and learning materials across all programs, ensuring that no one is disadvantaged due to lack of personal resources.

- Eliminate barriers that disproportionately impact historically marginalized communities, including financial, geographic, or physical obstacles.

- Invest in inclusive infrastructure.

- Foster a culture of respect, inclusion, and support.

The bill is revenue neutral and does not have a fiscal impact.

For these reasons, I urge the committee to issue a favorable report for SB142. Thank you for your time and consideration.

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