

SB7_FAV_USM.pdf

Uploaded by: Andy Clark

Position: FAV



SENATE EDUCATION, ENERGY, AND THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE
Senate Bill 7

**Higher Education - Douglas J. J. Peters Veterans of the Afghanistan and
Iraq Conflicts Scholarship - Repeal of Termination Date**

January 28, 2026

Favorable

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and committee members, thank you for the opportunity to ask for a Favorable Report on Senate Bill 7. Many will extol Douglas J.J. Peters' long and distinguished leadership in the Maryland Senate, his decorated service in the U.S. military, where his valor during Operation Desert Storm earned him the Bronze Star, and his faithful commitment to his church and his community.

For that legacy of service, he deserves every word of praise.

But, of course, what is especially close to our hearts within the University System of Maryland (USM) is Senator Peters' service as a valued member of the USM Board of Regents. Regent Peters left the Senate actively seeking a way to sustain his enormous impact on the citizens of Maryland and the strength of our state. As a USM regent, he was a steadfast advocate for our students, and in a fitting tribute that made him tremendously proud, the Maryland General Assembly named for him a scholarship awarded to students who served our country during the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

His leadership on vitally important Board committees – Education Policy and Student Life; Finance; Advancement; and Intercollegiate Athletics and Student-Athlete Health and Welfare – has shaped how we approach this work and the policies that guide it. While Regent Peters was dedicated to all of our USM universities, he held deep affection for Bowie State University, where he was regent liaison, and for his alma maters, the University of Maryland, College Park, where he earned his bachelor's degree, and the University of Baltimore, where he earned his MBA. Regent Peters' illness somehow did not slow his service. For years following his cancer diagnosis, he was a deeply engaged member of our Board. He was with us in this work – in mind, body, and spirit – to the very end. For that, we cannot adequately express our admiration or our gratitude.

Douglas J. J. Peters was a Maryland State Senator from 2007 to 2021 where he served as Majority Leader and Chair of Capital Budget. He was a Prince George's County Councilmember from 2002 to 2006 and Bowie City Councilmember from 1998 to 2002. He served as a Captain in the United States Army Reserve (1988-1998), served in Operation Desert Storm and was awarded the Bronze Star Medal. Peters is a Past Commander of the Bowie American Legion and VFW Posts; a 1985 graduate from the University of Maryland, College Park Smith School of Business majoring in Finance; and 1990 graduate of the University of Baltimore with a Master of Business Administration.

Currently, veterans and active-duty members of the U.S. Armed Forces who served in Afghanistan and Iraq, and members of the reserve or Maryland National Guard who were activated as a result of the conflicts, are eligible for the scholarships, as are their children, stepchildren, and spouses.

The USM is proud to support Senate Bill 7 and ensure the continued vitality of the Douglas J. J. Peters Veterans of the Afghanistan and Iraq Conflicts Scholarship by repealing its prior termination date. This enduring commitment makes it all the more fitting to honor former Senator Peters – whose leadership and service inspired the creation of this scholarship – by having it bear his name and continue supporting Maryland’s veterans and their families for generations to come. It is right and proper at this juncture to repeal the termination date.

For his service to the Nation and Maryland, we respectfully request a favorable report on Senate Bill 7.



Maryland Military Coalition SB0007 Written Testimo

Uploaded by: DAVID Dragics

Position: FAV



MARYLAND MILITARY COALITION

Serving Veterans through Legislative Advocacy

January 26, 2026

The Honorable Brian J. Feldman
Chair, Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
2 West Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Subject: Request for **FAVORABLE Report** – SB0007 – Higher Education – Douglas J. J. Peters
Veterans of the Afghanistan and Iraq Conflicts Scholarship – Repeal of Termination
Date

Dear Chair Feldman and distinguished members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment
Committee:

On behalf of the members of the Maryland Military Coalition¹ (MMC), I write to request a
FAVORABLE Report by the Committee on **SB0007 – Higher Education – Douglas J. J. Peters
Veterans of the Afghanistan and Iraq Conflicts Scholarship – Repeal of Termination Date**
sponsored by Senator Bryan Simonaire. This bill repeals the prohibition of awarding the initial
scholarship after June 30, 2030, or renewing it after the same date.

The MMC supports the elimination of the termination date of this scholarship, which provides
significant financial assistance to Maryland residents who are veterans, active-duty members,
or their spouses and children, and who qualify for the award. It supplements federal veterans'
education benefits, thereby reducing the financial burden on the awardee. Elimination of the
termination date signifies Maryland's commitment to those residents who served in the
Afghanistan and Iraq Conflict.

The Maryland Military Coalition **strongly supports SB0007** and asks for a **FAVORABLE** report
from the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee.

The Maryland Military Coalition is a registered non-profit, non-partisan advocacy organization
comprised of 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/>.

¹ See attached list of member organizations.

Subject: Request for **FAVORABLE Report** – SB0007 – Higher Education – Douglas J. J. Peters Veterans of the Afghanistan and Iraq Conflicts Scholarship – Repeal of Termination Date

We want to thank Senator Simonaire for sponsoring this legislation and supporting the uniformed services community in Maryland.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David L. Dragics". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial 'D'.

David L. Dragics
COL (Ret), U.S. Army
Legislative Director



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

SB0007_MACC_FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Drew Jabin

Position: FAV

Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
January 28, 2026

**SB 7 - Higher Education - Douglas J. J. Peters Veterans of the Afghanistan and Iraq Conflicts
Scholarship - Repeal of Termination Date**

Position: Favorable

The Maryland Association of Community Colleges (MACC), representing Maryland's 16 community colleges, supports **SB 7**. This bill repeals the termination date for the Douglas J. J. Peters Veterans of the Afghanistan and Iraq Conflicts Scholarship, ensuring that eligible veterans and their family members may continue to access this important educational benefit beyond the current statutory deadline.

Maryland's community colleges enroll a substantial number of veterans, active-duty service members, and military-connected students who often balance their education with work, family responsibilities, and ongoing service commitments. These students rely on stable, predictable financial aid to pursue certificates and degrees that lead to meaningful employment and career advancement. The Douglas J. J. Peters Scholarship provides critical support for tuition, fees, and other educational expenses, helping reduce financial barriers that can otherwise delay or prevent completion.

Maintaining this scholarship program without an artificial expiration date supports long-term planning for students and institutions alike and reinforces the State's commitment to supporting those who have served in the Afghanistan and Iraq conflicts and their families. This bill ensures continuity of this assistance for future cohorts of eligible students and avoids unnecessary disruption to an established and effective program. Accordingly, MACC urges the Committee to issue a **FAVORABLE** vote on **SB 7**.

Please contact Brad Phillips (bphillips@mdacc.org) or Drew Jabin (djabin@mdacc.org) with questions.

SB 7 Senator Simonaire_FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Kara Contino

Position: FAV

BRYAN W. SIMONAIRE
Legislative District 31
Anne Arundel County

Education, Energy, and the
Environment Committee

Joint Committee on the Chesapeake and
Atlantic Coastal Bays Critical Area



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11 Bladen Street, Room 320
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-841-3658 · 301-858-3658
800-492-7122 Ext. 3658
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Bryan.Simonaire@senate.state.md.us

The Senate of Maryland ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

SB 7 – Afghan Scholarship End Termination Date

I am Senator Bryan Simonaire presenting SB 7.

I worked with the Department of Veterans and Military Families and other military and education advocates on this bill.

The bill simply removes the termination date of June 2030 on the “Douglas J. J. Peters Veterans of the Afghanistan and Iraq Conflicts Scholarship” and allows it to continue until the General Assembly believes it no longer serves its purpose, just like every other scholarship in our Maryland laws.

Thereby giving our military families some certainty for planning for their family’s educational path.

Currently, the scholarship arbitrarily terminates in 4 years.

So instead of adding a couple years every so often, this bill gives certainty, to those brave men and woman and their families who sacrificially served our nation, that their scholarship benefits will be there going forward, and not end on some arbitrary date.

There is no fiscal note for this year, no increased funding amounts but it does continue the same commitment as we have made for the past 20 years.

Also, there have been no budget talks about reducing PINs at MHEC at the termination of the scholarship, so this will have no impact on the normal budgeting going forward.

To give a little history:

- In 2006, the scholarship was created with a termination date of 2012.

- In 2008, the scholarship was extended to 2016 (with MHEC favorable)
- In 2012, the scholarship was again extended to 2020 (with MHEC favorable)
- In 2020, the scholarship was again extended to 2030 (with MHEC no position)
- In 2023, the scholarship program was named after former Senator and my friend, Doug Peters, whom many of you served with in the Senate and died later that year... 2 days after his 60th birthday.
- The *Afghanistan conflict* was the longest war in our history lasting 20 years from September 11, 2001, and ending just 4 ½ years ago in August 2021.

So, who does the Scholarship apply to:

This scholarship is for those who served in the *Afghanistan and Iraq conflicts* and their dependents.

It applies to:

- *Veterans of the Afghanistan and Iraq conflicts*
- *Active service members who served in the Afghanistan and Iraq conflicts;*
- *Reserve component members who were activated as a result of the Afghanistan or Iraq conflict; or*
- *A spouse, daughter, son, stepdaughter, stepson of any who served in the Afghanistan and Iraq conflicts,*

So think about it, especially with the commitment we made to their dependents, it makes no sense to terminate the scholarship anytime soon.

Just for illustrative purposes highlighting the arbitrary termination date of 2030, imagine someone who served sometime in Afghanistan between 2020 and 2021:

- A young individual enlisted in 2018 and serves 20 years before completing their service and as a veteran at age of 40 seeks a scholarship in 2038.
- If that enlisted member had a child in 2033 at the age of 35, their child would need the scholarship in 2051.

If decades in the future, the General Assembly sees the scholarship program is no longer being used or affordable, they can address it at that point, just like they do for every other scholarship program.

By removing the termination date, it sends a clear message that Maryland honors its military and provides security for those planning to use the scholarship program at a later date.

We made a commitment to these men and women along with their families, and we should not terminate that commitment.

The mission of the *Department of Veterans and Military Families* is to serve veterans, service members and their families and this bill lines up with that mission.

In conclusion, this bill:

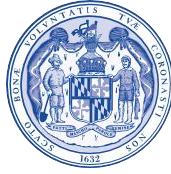
- Has no fiscal impact on this year's budget
- Provides security for our military families when planning their educational needs,
- Is projected to be needed for decades to come,
- Alleviates the General Assembly's constant modifying the termination date and aligns with all our other educational scholarships, and the termination date serves no effective purpose, and
- Honors the commitment we made to our service members and their families

For all these reasons, I ask for your favorable consideration.

Douglas JJ Peters Scholarship

Uploaded by: Major General Janeen Birkhead

Position: FAV



WES MOORE
GOVERNOR
COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF

STATE OF MARYLAND
MILITARY DEPARTMENT
FIFTH REGIMENT ARMORY
BALTIMORE, MARYLAND 21201-2288

JANEEN L. BIRCKHEAD
MAJOR GENERAL
THE ADJUTANT GENERAL

January 28, 2026

Chairman Senator Brian Feldman
Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
2 West Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Chair Feldman and Members of The Committee:

The Maryland Military Department is sending this letter to ask for a favorable report for Senate Bill 7 - Higher Education - Douglas J. J. Peters Veterans of the Afghanistan and Iraq Conflicts Scholarship - Repeal of Termination Date.

In effect, this legislation will have a positive impact for members and children of the Maryland National Guard, the Maryland Defense Force and our state workforce who served honorably during the Afghanistan and Iraq conflicts.

The point of contact for this letter is Dr. Tony Campbell, reachable at (443) 956-0108, or tony.campbell1@maryland.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Janeen L. Birckhead".

Janeen L. Birckhead
Major General, Maryland National Guard
The Adjutant General

DVMF SB0007 Support.pdf

Uploaded by: Morgan Murphy

Position: FAV



**Maryland Department of Veterans and Military Families
Office of the Secretary**

WES MOORE
GOVERNOR

ARUNA MILLER
LT. GOVERNOR

ED ROTHSTEIN
ACTING SECRETARY

**Senate Bill 7 - Higher Education - Douglas J. J. Peters Veterans of the Afghanistan and Iraq Conflicts
Scholarship - Repeal of Termination Date
SUPPORT**

January 28, 2026

The Honorable Brian Feldman
Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
2 West Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Committee Members,

The Maryland Department of Veterans and Military Families (DVMF) is committed to leading veterans and their families through life's transitions, making Maryland the best state for military-connected communities. Our department supports Senate Bill 7 - Higher Education - Douglas J. J. Peters Veterans of the Afghanistan and Iraq Conflicts Scholarship - Repeal of Termination Date.

The Douglas J.J. Peters Veterans of Afghanistan and Iraq Conflicts Scholarship (VAIC) is designed to provide financial assistance to United States armed forces personnel who served in the Afghanistan or Iraq Conflicts, and their son, daughter, stepson, stepdaughter, or spouse attending a Maryland postsecondary institution. Senate Bill 7 simply repeals the scholarship termination date, which DVMF wholeheartedly supports. This bill has no fiscal impact.

DVMF hopes this vital scholarship will continue to provide financial support, stability, and continuity for Maryland's military families for years to come.

Thank you for your time, and I respectfully ask the committee for a favorable report.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Edward C. Rothstein". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Ed Rothstein
Acting Secretary

SB7. MHEC. Favorable.pdf

Uploaded by: Sanjay Rai

Position: FAV



Governor

Wes Moore

Lt. Governor

Aruna Miller

Secretary

Sanjay Rai, Ph.D.

Commission Chair

Catherine J. "Cassie" Motz

Commission Vice Chair

Chike Aguh

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Barbara Kerr Howe

Narcisa A. Polonio, Ed.D.

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Sheila D. Thompson, Ph.D.

Craig A. Williams, Ph.D.

Janet E. Wormack, Ed.D.

Sarah Otwey, Student
Commissioner

Principal Counsel

Kimberly Smith Ward

January 28, 2026

The Honorable Brian Feldman
Chair, Education, Energy, and Environment Committee
2 West Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Chairman Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and the Honorable Members of the Education, Energy, and Environment Committee,

The Maryland Higher Education Commission respectfully requests a favorable report on SB 7 - Higher Education – Douglas J. J. Peters Veterans of the Afghanistan and Iraq Conflicts Scholarship – Repeal of Termination Date, sponsored by Senator Simonaire.

SB 7 ensures that Maryland's veterans and their families continue to have access to critical educational support. The scholarship was established to honor those who have served in the Afghanistan and Iraq conflicts — and to provide meaningful assistance for higher education costs, including tuition, fees, room, and board. By eliminating the sunset date and the renewal limitation, this bill will allow future generations of eligible veterans and their dependents to pursue postsecondary education without being constrained by arbitrary time limits.

Maryland should be a leader in honoring the service and sacrifice of our veterans. Removing the termination date aligns with our State's long-standing commitment to supporting military families and reinforcing opportunities for economic mobility through education. Extending this scholarship indefinitely will help:

- **Increase access to higher education** for veterans and their dependents statewide;
- **Enhance workforce readiness** by helping veterans transition into civilian careers with the credentials needed for success;
- **Honor the service of Maryland's military community** by offering sustained support rather than temporary programs.

MARYLAND HIGHER EDUCATION COMMISSION

217 East Redwood Street • Suite 2100 • Baltimore, MD 21202

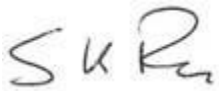
T 410.767.3300 • 800.974.0203 • F 410.332.0270 • TTY for the Deaf 800.735.2258 www.mhec.maryland.gov

This legislation also ensures clarity and fairness. Veterans currently serving and those who have not yet begun their educational journeys deserve certainty that this benefit remains available throughout their academic careers. Removing the renewal limitation ensures recipients are not penalized solely because of timing within the award period.

Despite these systemic limitations, the passage of SB 7 remains a priority to ensure that the baseline promise of support to our veterans does not expire. In conclusion, Senate Bill 7 is a thoughtful, equity-focused policy that supports both veterans and the State's economic future. I respectfully urge the committee to give SB 7 a favorable report.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Meghan Music, Executive Director of External and Legislative Affairs.

Yours in Service,

Handwritten signature of Sanjay Rai in blue ink.

Sanjay Rai

Secretary, Maryland Higher Education Commission

Douglas JJ Peters Scholarship

Uploaded by: Senator Bryan Simonaire

Position: FAV



The *Douglas J.J. Peters Veterans of Afghanistan and Iraq Conflicts Scholarship (VAIC)* is designed to provide financial assistance to United States Uniformed Services personnel who served in the Afghanistan or Iraq Conflicts, and their dependents attending a Maryland postsecondary institution.



Currently to terminate June 2030



Timeline

2006 — Scholarship Created

Termination date of 2012.

2008 — First Extension

New termination date: 2016.

2012 — Second Extension

New termination date: 2020.

2020 — Third Extension

New termination date: June 30, 2030.

2023 — Program Renamed

Renamed **Douglas J. J. Peters Veterans of the Afghanistan and Iraq Conflicts Scholarship**, honoring former Maryland Senator Doug Peters for his service and legislative work.

2026 — Ongoing Authorization

Removes the 2030 sunset and allows the scholarship to continue until the General Assembly determines it no longer serves its purpose, aligning it with other Maryland scholarship programs.



Service Member:

- Served in Afghanistan at **20**
- Continued serving **20 years** after the 2021 withdrawal
- Retired in **2041**
- Start school in **2042**
- Ineligible scholarship ended **June 30, 2030**



Dependent:

- Dependent born **2035**
- Dependent not college age until **2053**
- Ineligible scholarship ended **June 30, 2030**