

SB243_USM_FAV.pdf

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Position: FAV



SENATE EDUCATION, ENERGY, AND THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE
Senate Bill 243
Uniformed Services Spouses Act
February 12, 2026
Favorable

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and committee members, thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony in support of Senate Bill 243. The bill seeks to expand existing Maryland laws that provide priority course registration, support services, and scholarship access so that these benefits also apply to the spouses of active-duty servicemembers and veterans. The bill's intention is to ensure that military spouses receive equitable access to higher-education and employment resources across Maryland.

The University System of Maryland (USM) is composed of twelve distinguished institutions and three regional centers. We award eight out of every ten bachelor's degrees in the state. Each of USM's institutions has a distinct and unique approach to the mission of educating students and promoting the economic, intellectual, and cultural growth of its surrounding community. These institutions are located throughout the state, from western Maryland to the Eastern Shore, with the flagship campus in the Washington suburbs. The USM includes three Historically Black Institutions, comprehensive institutions and research universities, and the country's largest public online institution.

The USM already demonstrates strong leadership in serving military-connected students and their families, and Senate Bill 243 further reinforces and expands this support. The University of Maryland Global Campus (UMGC) is specifically dedicated to serving working adults, military servicemembers, veterans, and their families – [including military spouses](#) – through flexible online, hybrid, and in-person programs designed to accommodate frequent relocations and unpredictable schedules. Likewise, the University of Maryland, Baltimore (UMB) offers award-winning academic programs and targeted [services](#) that address the unique needs of active-duty servicemembers, veterans, and military spouses, including financial-aid guidance, institutional policies aligned with federal protections, and comprehensive support resources.

By extending benefits such as priority registration and scholarship eligibility to military spouses, Senate Bill 243 builds on these existing institutional commitments and helps standardize support across the USM. With UMGC and UMB already modeling best practices in military-responsive education, this legislation represents a meaningful opportunity to enhance stability, economic mobility, and educational continuity for Maryland's military families.

The USM respectfully request a favorable report on Senate Bill 243.



UNIVERSITY SYSTEM
of MARYLAND



Maryland Military Coalition SB0243 Written Testimo

Uploaded by: David Lutzow

Position: FAV



MARYLAND MILITARY COALITION

Serving Veterans through Legislative Advocacy

February 10, 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** – SB0243 – Uniformed Services Spouses Act

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 recommend a **FAVORABLE report** by the Committee on **SB0243** Uniformed Services Spouses Act, sponsored by Senator Bryan Simonaire. This bill is a continuation of the centralization and modernization of Maryland's Code with respect to military terms, synchronizing it with the federal code.

The MMC supports this bill as it enables priority registration at institutions of higher education, Public Service Commission, and private employers. **SB0243** also corrects definitional meanings in Articles – Education Section 15–124, 16–109, 18–405(d)(3), 18–406(g), and 18–501(b)(2)(iii), and 18–401 and 18–501(a); Labor and Employment Section 3–714(a) and (b); Public Utilities Section 18–111(a) and (b); and, State Personnel and Pensions Section 7–207(c)(1)(i), (2), and (3) and 7–207(c)(1)(iii).

The Maryland Military Coalition **strongly supports SB0243** 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, representing over 150,000 service-connected individuals, including those currently serving, veterans, retirees and their families, caregivers, and survivors.

Subject: **Request FAVORABLE Report** – SB0243 – Uniformed Services Spouses Act

The MMC thanks Senator Simonaire for sponsoring this legislation and supporting the uniformed services community in Maryland. To learn more about our organization, please visit our [website](#).

Respectfully,

David Lutzow

David Lutzow

Senior Master Sergeant (Ret), U.S. Air Force

Director

1 Attachment – Member Organizations of the Maryland Military Coalition



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

SB 243 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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Bryan.Simonaire@senate.state.md.us

The Senate of Maryland
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

SB 243 – Uniformed Services Spouse Act

I am Senator Bryan Simonaire presenting SB 243.

I worked and coordinated with the:

- *Department of Veterans and Military Families,*
- *University System of Maryland,*
- *Maryland Association of Community Colleges,*
- *Maryland Higher Education Commission and*
- *Military advocates on this consensus legislation.*

This bill also lines up with the mission of *the Department of Veterans and Military Families.*

The overall objective of this bill is to include Uniformed Services' spouses where:

1. Veterans or Service members already are receiving these benefits, and
2. It is appropriate and good state policy recognizing their contribution to the state and nation.

The goal is to honor military spouses and build on making Maryland a *Military Family friendly* state.

Specifically, this bill does 4 main things:

1. Current law allows legislative scholarships to Maryland active-duty service members while deployed outside the state – this bill would allow the accompanying spouse to also be eligible for a legislative scholarship.

2. Current law provides higher education priority course registration for active-duty service members – this bill would allow their spouse priority course registration as well.
3. Current law requires community colleges to assist veterans with enrollment, available services and use of the resource center – this bill would include assistance for veteran’s spouses, and
4. Current law provides enabling authority for hiring preference to veterans, service members and their spouses in state and local government. This bill standardizes the language in these sections including adding spouses in one section that was missing the spouse provision.

That is the bill and for all these reasons, I ask for your favorable consideration.

SB 243 FAV MHEC.pdf

Uploaded by: Meghan Music

Position: FAV



February 12, 2026

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

Governor

Wes Moore

Lt. Governor

Aruna Miller

Secretary

Sanjay Rai, Ph.D.

Commission Chair

Catherine J. "Cassie" Motz

Commission Vice Chair

Chike Aguh

Commissioners

Kathleen Bands, Ph.D.

Mickey L. Burnim, Ph.D.

Charlene Mickens Dukes, Ed.D.

Barbara Kerr Howe

Narcisa A. Polonio, Ed.D.

Rebecca Taber Staehelin

Sheila D. Thompson, Ph.D.

Craig A. Williams, Ph.D.

Janet E. Wormack, Ed.D.

Sarah Otwey, Student
Commissioner

Principal Counsel

Kimberly Smith Ward

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 243 – Uniformed Services Spouses Act, sponsored by Senator Simonaire.

SB 243 thoughtfully expands existing benefits and protections afforded to veterans and active service members to include their spouses, recognizing the critical role military families play in supporting service members and the unique challenges they face—particularly frequent relocations, interrupted educational pathways, and barriers to degree completion.

This legislation builds upon Maryland's longstanding commitment to supporting military-connected students by ensuring that spouses of service members have equitable access to higher education opportunities and campus-based support. Specifically, SB 243 would require public institutions of higher education to extend priority course registration to eligible service members and their spouses, expand veteran-focused support services at community colleges to include spouses, and ensure access to advising, resources, and dedicated study spaces. These provisions promote continuity, stability, and student success for military families navigating higher education.

As it relates to State-administered financial aid, SB 243 would allow Senatorial and Delegate Scholarships to be used at accredited institutions outside Maryland when the applicant is an active service member or the spouse of an active service member domiciled in the State. This change reflects the realities of military service, where duty assignments may require families to reside outside Maryland while maintaining State residency.

Importantly, SB 243 does not create a fiscal or operational impact on the Maryland Higher Education Commission. The bill's provisions are implemented at the institutional level and do not alter MHEC's administrative responsibilities, staffing, or budget.

MHEC supports SB 243 for its recognition of military spouses as an essential part of the military-connected student population and for

MARYLAND HIGHER EDUCATION COMMISSION

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advancing equitable access to higher education across Maryland's postsecondary system.

For these reasons, the Maryland Higher Education Commission respectfully urges a favorable report on Senate Bill 243.

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

Yours in Service,

Sanjay Rai

Secretary, Maryland Higher Education Commission

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DVMF SB0243 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 243 - Uniformed Services Spouses Act
SUPPORT**

February 12, 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 243 - Uniformed Services Spouses Act.

SB 243 expands priority registration, resources, and support at public institutions of higher education, to spouses of active service members and veterans. This bill is a critical step in ensuring that Maryland remains a military-friendly state, easing the educational transition for military-connected families who already face unique challenges due to frequent relocations.

Expanding eligibility to include spouses acknowledges the reality that military service impacts not just the service member or veteran, but the entire family. This inclusion of military spouses aligns with Maryland's commitment to a whole-of-government approach to serving veterans and their families, ensuring that no one is left behind. This bill has no fiscal impact for the Department.

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

DVMF SB243 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 243 - Uniformed Services Spouses Act
SUPPORT**

February 12, 2026

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

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

Ed Rothstein
Acting Secretary

SB 243 Uniformed Services Spouses Act Act FAV AARP

Uploaded by: Sara Westrick

Position: FAV



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SB 243 – Uniformed Services Spouses Act
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 243. 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 Senators Simonaire, Brooks, Carozza, Ellis, Gallion, Gile, Smith, West, and Watson 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 243 do?

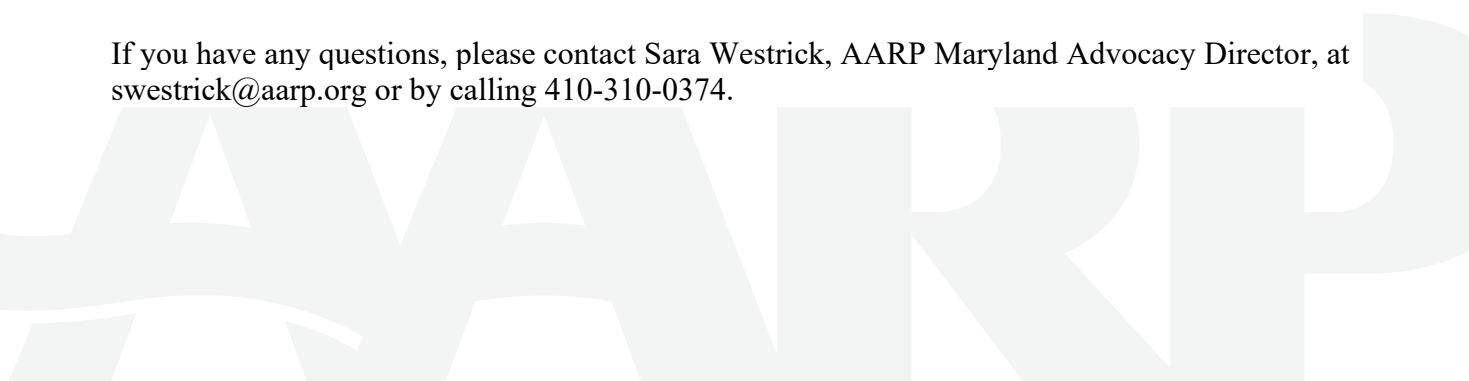
This bill helps fill gaps and provides clarification to legislation passed last year that updated the Maryland code to be more in line with the federal code. These new provisions for spouses of veterans apply to priority registration at public institutions of higher education, resources and support at community colleges, senatorial and delegate scholarships, and preferences in hiring by the Public Service Commission to the spouses of active service members and veterans.

How will it help veterans?

Last year, Senator Simonaire sponsored a package of bills to have state officials recognize military service and to help ensure that members of the military and their families are aware of the benefits they are eligible to receive. This bill clarifies that those benefits also apply to spouses of veterans. AARP believes we must ensure that our veterans and their spouses have the most efficient access to the benefits they are entitled to receive.

For these reasons, we recommend a favorable report for SB 243.

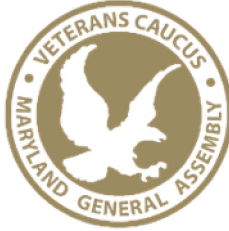
If you have any questions, please contact Sara Westrick, AARP Maryland Advocacy Director, at swestrick@aarp.org or by calling 410-310-0374.



SB243_Veterans.pdf

Uploaded by: Veterans Caucus Maryland

Position: FAV



MARYLAND GENERAL ASSEMBLY
VETERANS CAUCUS

February 12, 2026

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

Re: SB243: Uniformed Services Spouses Act

Dear Chairman Feldman,

Please let this letter serve as notice of the support of the Maryland General Assembly Veterans Caucus for Senate Bill 243.

After review by our respective legislative committee, the Veterans Caucus believes that the above-mentioned legislation would provide a valuable benefit to the veterans of the State of Maryland and requests a favorable report.

With kindest regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Benjamin T. Brooks".

Senator Benjamin Brooks
Senate Chair

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mike Rogers".

Delegate Mike Rogers
House Chair