

Good afternoon Chair, Vice Chair, and members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to speak in support of House Bill 102. My name is Lindsay Livingston, I serve as the Director of Communications, Outreach, and Advocacy for the Department of Veterans and Military Families. Our mission is to lead veterans, service members, and their families through life's transitions.

I am also a military spouse of over 18 years. My husband has served in the U.S. Navy for over 23 years, of which he served 15 consecutive years of sea duty. Together, we have raised three boys who, like so many military children, have had to navigate the challenges of frequent relocations.

On average, a military child moves 6-9 times during their K-12 career. **My oldest son, now in ninth grade, is in his sixth school, my fifth grader-his fourth school, and my third grader- his third school.**

Every move brings a new set of challenges—enrolling in a new school, transferring transcripts, ensuring continued access to support services, and adjusting to different state policies and requirements. As a mother, these transitions are not just logistically difficult but emotionally exhausting. **The burden of advocating for my children's education while managing the stress of relocation should not fall so heavily on military families.**

This bill provides a vital solution. By allowing military families to advance enroll their children remotely before arriving in Maryland, it removes a significant barrier to educational continuity.

**It ensures that military children are not left behind waiting for paperwork to process or seats to become available. This bill also facilitates coordination between school districts, for families with children who need special education services (like my own), preventing unnecessary delays in receiving essential support.**

Maryland is home to thousands of military families, and we must remain competitive in attracting and retaining them. **Twenty-three states have already passed legislation to make school enrollment easier for military-connected families.** When service members receive orders to move, they are not just looking for a place to live—they are looking for communities to thrive in—they are looking for employment and the best schools for their children. This bill sends a strong message that Maryland values its military community and is committed to making their transition here as smooth as possible. I urge you to support this bill and remove unnecessary obstacles for the families who sacrifice so much for our nation.