

SB0309/963322/1

BY: Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

AMENDMENTS TO SENATE BILL 309
(First Reading File Bill)

AMENDMENT NO. 1

On page 1, in the sponsor line, strike “**Senator Simonaire**” and substitute “**Senators Simonaire, Brooks, and Carozza**”; in line 2, strike “**Online Registry**” and substitute “Communications, Outreach, and Advocacy Program – Alterations”; strike beginning with “establish” in line 4 down through “information” in line 6 and substitute “expand certain services to include service members and their families”; in line 7, strike “about the online registry”; in line 11, after “9–901” insert “9–940, 9–942, 9–943,”; strike in their entirety lines 14 through 18, inclusive; and in line 21, strike “9–945 and”.

AMENDMENT NO. 2

On page 2, strike in their entirety lines 3 through 8, inclusive; in lines 9 and 10, in each instance, strike the brackets; in the same lines, strike “(E)” and “(F)”, respectively; strike in their entirety lines 12 through 14, inclusive; and in lines 15, 16, 17, 20, 21, and 22, strike “(H)”, “(I)”, “(J)”, “(K)”, “(L)”, and “(M)”, respectively, and substitute “(D)”, “(E)”, “(F)”, “(G)”, “(H)”, and “(I)”, respectively.

On page 3, after line 2, insert:

“(b) There is a Communications, Outreach, and Advocacy Program in the Department.

(c) The purpose of the Program is to ensure that:

(1) veterans, SERVICE MEMBERS, AND THEIR FAMILIES are informed of the services, benefits, and assistance available to them from the State and federal government and community organizations; and

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(2) general issues relating to veterans', SERVICE MEMBERS', AND THEIR FAMILIES' needs are brought to the attention of the Governor and the General Assembly in order for them to be addressed.

9-942.

(a) The Program shall actively help veterans, SERVICE MEMBERS, and their dependents become aware of and access any service or benefit to which they are entitled including:

- (1) tax benefits;
- (2) health care benefits;
- (3) disability benefits; and
- (4) pension benefits.

(b) The Program, in collaboration with the Maryland Higher Education Commission, shall actively help veterans, SERVICE MEMBERS, and their dependents become aware of and access education and training benefits to which they are entitled.

(c) The director of the Program shall:

- (1) support veterans, SERVICE MEMBERS, and their dependents through the service or benefit process; and
- (2) refer veterans, [veterans'] SERVICE MEMBERS, THEIR dependents, and [veterans'] THEIR survivors to the appropriate governmental unit for claim assistance.

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9-943.

(a) (1) For the purposes of reaching any veteran, [veteran's] SERVICE MEMBER, dependent OF A VETERAN OR SERVICE MEMBER, or [veteran's] survivor OF A VETERAN OR SERVICE MEMBER in need of assistance in obtaining services or benefits granted by the law, the director shall develop and implement a communications and outreach plan.

(2) In order to carry out the director's responsibilities under paragraph (1) of this subsection, the director may:

(i) enter into contracts; and

(ii) work with governmental units and community-based organizations, including the Maryland Department of Health, the Department of Aging, faith-based groups, veterans groups, senior centers, adult day care centers, institutions of higher education, and other entities the director considers appropriate.

(b) (1) The director shall develop mechanisms for outreach to be disseminated by direct mail and through community-based veterans organizations, the Department, the Department of Human Services, the Maryland Department of Health, and any other State agency or unit the director considers appropriate.

(2) Communication mechanisms shall include:

(i) designing marketing materials describing the services provided by the Program;

(ii) a regular electronic newsletter;

(Over)

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(iii) brochures describing various benefits or any other issue or benefit of interest to veterans, SERVICE MEMBERS, or their dependents; and

(iv) other measures the director considers appropriate.

(c) The Department shall communicate welcome home information to veterans AND SERVICE MEMBERS returning to the State.

(d) The Department, in conjunction with the types of community-based organizations listed in subsection (a)(2) of this section, shall develop communication tools to assist in identifying veterans, SERVICE MEMBERS, and dependents who may be eligible for benefits and programs offered by the Department.

(e) The Program shall:

(1) manage the Maryland Veterans Service Animal Program and Fund established under Part VIII of this subtitle;

(2) coordinate the responsibilities of veterans' services specialists designated under § 9-944 of this subtitle; and

(3) manage Department media relations, web content, social media, internal and external communications, customer service training, and intergovernmental relations.

(f) The director shall serve, as necessary, as the Secretary's designee to appropriate commissions, workgroups, and councils."

On pages 3 and 4, strike in their entirety the lines beginning with line 3 on page 3 through line 6 on page 4, inclusive.

On page 4, strike in their entirety lines 12 through 19, inclusive, and substitute:

**“(8) A GENERAL ASSESSMENT OF COMMUNICATION METHODS
UTILIZED IN SUPPORT OF THE COMMUNICATIONS, OUTREACH, AND ADVOCACY
PROGRAM; AND”.**