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## **Senate Bill 282 - Maryland National Guard - Tuition Assistance Program - Modifications**

### **Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee**

**February 12, 2020**

**Cara Sullivan, Deputy Legislative Officer, Governor's Legislative Office**

Chair Pinsky, Vice-Chair Kagan, Members of the Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee:

Senate Bill 282 will strengthen the Maryland National Guard by increasing the amount of tuition assistance the state can provide to National Guard members and expanding the tuition assistance program to all ranks within the National Guard.

Current law allows the state to provide up to 50% of the cost of in-state tuition for any regularly scheduled undergraduate, graduate, professional, vocational-technical, or trade course for any current member attending an institution certified as eligible by the Adjutant General. SB 282 would allow the state to provide up to 100% of the cost. SB 282 would also expand participation to all ranks of the National Guard.

All of Maryland's neighboring states offer 100% tuition reimbursement programs, and Pennsylvania extends their program to spouses of National Guard members. SB 282 will help Maryland maintain its competitive edge in recruiting National Guard members.

A National Guard member who is enlisted and has at least 24 months remaining to serve on his or her current enlistment or an officer or warrant officer who agrees in writing to serve for a minimum of 24 months is eligible to be certified by the Adjutant General to participate in the program. In addition, a member who receives assistance for an undergraduate credit, vocational-technical, or trade course shall remain an active member for at least 2 years following completion of the course; for graduate and professional courses, the bill requires at least 4 years.

SB 282 will help provide our Maryland National Guard with additional education and skills to compete in an ever-changing battlefield. Current enrollment data shows that an additional 600 members could have used the tuition reimbursement program had there been additional funding.

Members of the Maryland National Guard serve us honorably both at home here in Maryland and across the world. Not only is SB 282 good policy to strengthen the Maryland National Guard, it is the right thing to do for the brave men and women who sacrifice to keep us safe.

For these reasons, the Administration respectfully requests a favorable report on SB 282.

