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MARYLAND MILITARY COALITION

SENATE BILL 282 – SUPPORT

Maryland National Guard – Tuition Assistance Program – Modifications Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee

February 12, 2020

The Maryland Military Coalition is a **nonprofit, all volunteer, Veterans advocacy group** representing the interests of Maryland Veterans, Service members, and their Families. Our alliance consists of sixteen organizations, listed on the following page, with over 100,000 members. We represent about one-fourth of Maryland's Veterans.

The Maryland Military Coalition strongly supports Senate Bill 282.

As you know, this bill increases, from 50% to 100%, the percentage of tuition that may be reimbursed of the cost of in-State tuition for certain courses for any active National Guard member attending certain institutions; and expanding the definition of "member" as it relates to who can receive tuition reimbursement to include any individual who holds a commission in the National Guard.

Maryland National Guard Soldiers and Airmen are truly thrice the citizens! In their civilian capacities, they work and engage in their in their communities as business leaders, teachers, and first responders, and more. They remain ready, at a moment's notice, to respond to a variety of state emergencies and natural disasters. Also, our National Guard, the backbone of our All Volunteer Force, has borne much of the burden of nearly two decades of combat following 9/11.

National Guard service is clearly demanding! Frequent mobilizations for overseas deployments, coupled with short-notice responses to emergencies and disasters, can wreak havoc on employment and family life. **And yet they serve!**

So, what should we be doing for them?

The Tuition Assistance program is not only an important recruiting and retention tool, it also helps ensure that our fellow Marylanders can continue their educations, becoming better citizens, Soldiers, and Airmen. It also serves as a most appropriate, well-deserved, hard-earned reward for their arduous service on our behalf.

We strongly support this initiative to improve the educational opportunities for our Maryland National Guard!

The Maryland Military Coalition **requests a favorable report for Senate Bill 282.**

For questions or additional information, please feel free to contact me at
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Member Organizations, Maryland Military Coalition

James P. Monahan
Air Force Sergeants Association

Stacy P. May
American Military Society

Lynn A. Nash
Commissioned Officers Association of the
US Public Health Service

Wilbert B. Forbes
Disabled American Veterans

Sheldon Goldberg
Distinguished Flying Cross Association

Pleasala J. Collins
Fleet Reserve Association

Evan A. Buttrick
Jewish War Veterans of the USA

Steve L. Bloodgood
Maryland Air National Guard Retirees'
Association

Harvey Kaplan
Military Officers Association of America

Charles Egbert
Military Order of the Purple Heart

Mervyn Rice
National Association for Black Veterans

Michael P. Hays
Naval Enlisted Reserve Association

Christian Andreasen
NOAA Association of Commissioned Officers

Catherine L. McGraw
Society of Military Widows

Arthur L. Cooper
The Retired Enlisted Association

Thomas C. Williams
Veterans of Foreign Wars

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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.

