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Appropriations Committee



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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

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Dear Chairwoman Kaiser and Members of the Committee

HB 1109 - Disabled Active Duty Service Members, Disabled Veterans, and Surviving Spouses - Exemption From Property Tax and Other Charges and Refunds

I come here today advocating for House Bill 1109 in hopes of a favorable vote. HB 1109 deals with our nation's and our states most treasured resource. I imagine I speak for everyone when I say we have had a family member, a friend, a neighbor, an associate or maybe just someone we looked up to that fits this category. I come before you today advocating on behalf of the brave men and women whose valiant and dedicated service to our country showed such incredible commitment that as a result they have suffered so much either physically or mentally that they have been deemed permanently disabled.

So we can all agree the importance of what we are trying to accomplish. Now to understand more about the bill and its intent. In regards to HB 1109, it is important to know we already acknowledge in law the sacrifice and service of our heroes.

Under current law, Section 7-208 of the Tax Property Article provides honorably discharged veterans who have a permanent 100% service connected disability with an exemption from paying real estate taxes on their home. The exemption extends to un-remarried surviving spouses of honorably discharged 100% disabled veterans along with the surviving spouses and Dependency and Indemnity Compensation beneficiaries of active duty service-members who died in the line of duty in defense of the United States.

The major intent of this bill is to make things whole and show that we are serious about serving our veterans throughout 100% of their journey, just as they did for us.

The problem lies in some instances, there is a lag time between the time a veteran applies to the federal government for disability benefits and when a State and local property tax exemption is granted due to the time it takes to process claims at the federal level. As a result, the individual

has to pay State and local property taxes while the application is processed and approved. This bill allows these individuals to receive a refund for any property taxes paid for up to five years from when the disability claim was filed.

So more simply put, an individual could be suffering immensely but has to go through such a long process that they receive little help on our end.

The fiscal cost of this bill is minimum compared to what so many of our incredible veterans have gone through. Disabled Vets have a diminished work capacity, and therefore their household income is affected as such. Disability income is often well below what the vet would earn if they were not disabled. These tax benefits can go such a long way in a disabled veterans' life. So many of us, myself included only know the hell, hardships and heartaches of war by what we hear or what we see on TV and movies. Fortunately for us we can change the channel but for our disabled veterans they live with the scars physically and emotional for the rest of their lives. PTSD, Torn limbs, brain damage, bullet wounds just some examples of the challenges our beloved veterans face.

To summarize, George Washington said it best "the willingness with which our young people are likely to serve in any war, no matter how justified, shall be directly proportional as to how they perceive the veterans of earlier wars were treated and appreciated by their nation.

Our goal as a legislative body should be to show the nation and show our residents that Maryland is a state who will sacrifice for our veterans just as they have sacrificed for us. It is the least we can do.