

Testimony to be read on 2 February 2021  
MD State Senate  
Committee on Education, Health and Environmental Affairs

Good Afternoon, I'm David Bishop of Arnold, Maryland, Testifying on behalf of myself and approximately 150,000 other Maryland Veterans as a part of the Maryland Military Coalition and the Fleet Reserve Association. I'm here today to show our full commitment to support the commission of a much needed memorial to the Women Veterans of our Armed Forces.

As a new Marine recruit on Parris Island one of the most significant parts of training is the history of our Corps. Several parts of that history have stuck with me through repetition, such as 2 time medal of Honor recipients, Smedley Butler and Dan Daily and the battles of Chosin Reservoir and Belleau Wood.

Some of that history after 20 years, I have unfortunately forgotten. But one vital piece of information sticks with me and I believe it should be front and center, even right here in Annapolis for everyone to recognize, the recognized first female Marine: Opha Mae Johnson and her fellow veterans. There are few who step on those yellow footprints aboard Parris Island, or San Diego or Quantico to join the Marine Corps, and even fewer women who accept that challenge. Like their male counterparts, they sign up for ALL positions and jobs within the military, including today, combat. Women have overcome great and unthinkable obstacles to have the honor of serving our armed forces since the beginning of our nation. Even so far back as the Civil war, and likely earlier, there are confirmed cases of women posing as men so they can honorably fight in combat for our freedoms.

I honestly find it an embarrassment that, in a state that prides itself on progressive action, that the best our female veterans have received is a single 12" plaque, hidden behind a truck stop. These women were pioneers in an environment more hostile than any other on the planet: War. They had to fight, to have the honor to go fight. They faced adversity, not just on the battlefield, but off the battlefield in a fraternity that was unwelcoming and did not consider them equal. Even today, they still overcome and prove wrong those voices of discrimination and denial. Every person who is able to meet the standards of becoming an American warrior, Army, Navy Marine Corps, Air Force, earns the right to wear the uniforms of our armed services. We owe them all debts we can never truly repay and we should honor their work and sacrifice in any way possible. A highly noticeable memorial here in Annapolis is the least we can do to honor their memory. We strongly encourage the passage of this bill and look forward to seeing the memorial built.