

Testimony for Maryland House of Delegates Bill 790
David A. Bishop, Maryland Military Coalition
Submitted for Testimony on 3 March 2021

I am testifying today on behalf of the Maryland Military Coalition, a collective of 16 Active and Veteran Military Organizations, including the Fleet Reserve Association which I represent. The MMC is comprised of over 150,000 members and clients across our State.

Maryland has rightly long offered preferential treatment to certain categories of small business owners due to uncontrollable life circumstance in order to balance the scales of economic competition in state contracts and services. This is necessary and just in a nation that has a history of discrimination or disadvantage against such life circumstances.

However, an often forgotten group of small business owners within our state are not victims of life circumstance, but people who have volunteered to give the ultimate sacrifice to defend our freedoms. These men and women made a personal choice to serve our country, often at great personal expense, and at a minimum the highest personal risk. They set aside the pursuit of professional careers to provide such service to our country, pushing back their possibilities of success.

Now, the government in which these great veterans served does provide greater competitive advantage to those who pursue academic options after and during service. Unfortunately, it has failed at providing a competitive boost to those who may not be as academically inclined, or who might have a greater ability in different fields as business owners.

Our State and Federal Government provides employer incentives to hire veterans, but doesn't give the same level of incentive for self determination in starting our own businesses. Since it's inception, the self certifying option for the Small Business Reserve has limped along, barely even offering any real opportunity for veteran owned businesses. It is time these entrepreneurs are recognized as deserving of their efforts and sacrifice in our state. I strongly encourage a favorable reading for HB 790 to allow Veteran Owned Small Businesses to be included in Maryland's MBE program.

Thank you

David A. Bishop
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