

March 28, 2022

The Honorable Guy Guzzone, Chairman
The Honorable Jim Rosapepe, Vice Chairman
Member of the Senate Budget & Taxation Committee
3 West, Miller Senate Office Building, Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: Requesting FAVORABLE REPORT: HB 617 – Tax Credit for Surviving Spouses of Fallen Service Members

Dear Chairman Guzzone, Vice Chairman Rosapepe, and Members of the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee:

My name is Amy Siegel, surviving spouse of SFC Nicholas A. Siegel, US Army who was killed in the line of duty on 7/21/2016. He was only 35 when he died, leaving behind an unborn daughter, Genevieve, and myself, a soon to be new single mother. Nick was a provider and a true patriot.

HB 617 holds special meaning to me and to all Maryland Gold Stars. For myself, it is a way that my husband, Nick, can still provide for his family even though he is no longer with us. The VA makes it possible for surviving family members to be taken care of when their loved one dies. One of the ways they help lift the burden is the provision for real property tax exemption for all unmarried surviving spouses. It is just one of the benefits we receive as a reminder of our country's gratitude for our loved one's sacrifice, but it is significant. What is surprising to me is that while the VA has provided this benefit, the counties in Maryland have decided who is eligible to receive this benefit, applying such minimizing and exclusive parameters making it almost impossible for any surviving spouse to receive such benefit. It is quite frankly confusing and frustrating. After our loved one dies, we hear "Thank you for your and your spouse's service" only to turn around and hear "While yes, it is a benefit you don't qualify because of ABC." Already having so much to deal with, it is disheartening to hear these words knowing that this was one of the benefits we are entitled to get under the VA.

In the end, it should be cut and dry, plain and simple! Surviving spouses of service members who died in the line of duty are eligible for property tax exemption. This is not an issue that should be up for debate, scrutinized or minimized for monetary gain. It is a way to say thank you for your service and I am sorry for your loss.

I respectfully ask the members of the Budget and Taxation Committee for a favorable report for HB 617. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Best regards,

Amy Siegel

618 Cedar Ln, Bel Air, MD 21015

410-746-0494

