

Statement of Jayson L. Spiegel, Reserve Organization of America
SB 365
State Government – Veterans Commission - Membership
February 8, 2022
FAVORABLE

Dear Chair Pinsky and members of the Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee:

The 1,000 members and leadership of the Maryland Department of the Reserve Organization of America (ROA) are in strong support of SB 365. The bill would amend Maryland State Government Code Section 9-917 to add ROA as a member organization on the Maryland Veterans Commission. The Maryland Department of ROA thanks Senator Simonaire for introducing SB 365 and for his consistent leadership and support of veterans' issues.

My name is Jayson Spiegel and I am testifying on behalf of the Maryland Department of ROA. I am a Gaithersburg resident (District 17) and retired after 28 years commissioned service in the Army and Army Reserve. I am a Life Member of ROA and served as its National Executive Director. I also represent ROA on the board of directors of the [Maryland Military Coalition](#) and I am authorized to state that the MMC supports enactment of SB 365.

ROA, formerly known as the Reserve Officers Association, was founded 100 years ago by General of the Armies John Pershing and other World War I veterans. ROA was chartered by Congress in Public Law 595, 81st Congress (1950). The act was signed by President Harry Truman, one of ROA's first members.

ROA is America's only exclusive advocate for the Reserve and National Guard – all ranks, all services. Both officers and enlisted personnel can join ROA, which includes members from all 8 uniformed services – Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, Space Force, Public Health Service and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. With a sole focus on support of the Reserve and National Guard, ROA promotes the interests of Reserve Component members, their families, and veterans of Reserve service.

The Maryland Department of ROA provides a variety of services for currently serving Reserve Component personnel and veterans. ROA provides training, education and mentorship for its members. It affords junior personnel the opportunity to hear directly from senior leaders who provide updates on current issues. Through our membership in the Maryland Military Coalition, ROA advocates for veterans before the General Assembly and the Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs. ROA also provides affinity partner benefits, including discounts on a variety of products and services, as well as college scholarships for member dependents.

Additionally, ROA offers a litigation support center to its members, which is particularly valuable for Reserve and National Guard personnel who experience problems with their civilian employers when they return from deployment or an active duty tour. ROA's attorneys have filed amicus briefs at the U.S. Supreme Court in support of Reserve personnel dismissed from civilian employment because of their military obligations.

The Maryland Department of ROA strongly supports SB 365 to add ROA as a member organization on the Maryland Veterans Commission. ROA's perspective would be invaluable for the Commission as it works to serve the needs of all Maryland's veterans. The Commission

membership includes 16 member organizations, but none exclusively focused on the needs of the Reserve and National Guard.

As a member of the Commission, ROA will be able to give voice to the concerns of National Guard and Reserve personnel of all ranks, including their reemployment after mobilization, pay, benefits, medical care, education, and other needed supports. These issues are of particular importance to National Guard personnel on State Active Duty in Maryland. With SB 365, ROA will be better equipped to work with the Department of Veterans Affairs in ensuring Maryland's veterans—many of whom are ROA members—are informed of available resources and are able to succeed in the state they call home.

For the above reasons, the Maryland Department of the Reserve Organization of America respectfully requests a **favorable report** on SB 365.

Sincerely,

Jayson L. Spiegel
LTC, US Army (Retired)

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