

Written Testimony of Wes Moore
Former Army Captain and Candidate for Governor
Before the House Health and Government Operations Committee
Burial in State Veterans' Cemeteries - Spouses and Dependents
FAVORABLE (House Bill 1251)

Chair Pendergrass, Vice Chair Pena Melnyk, and Members of the House Government and Operations Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of **House Bill 1251, Burial in State Veterans' Cemeteries - Spouses and Dependents.**

First, allow me to thank Delegates Chanel Branch, Charles, Crosby, Foley, Landis, Patterson, and Wilson for sponsoring this bill. Simple but meaningful acts like this go a long way in demonstrating Maryland's gratitude for our service members. Your work is appreciated.

This legislation ensures that Maryland's Department of Veterans Affairs cannot charge a fee for the cost of opening and closing the burial plot of a veteran to allow for their spouse or dependent to be buried with them. This prohibition will prevent family members and loved ones from incurring last-minute costs for laying to rest veterans with their families.

Maryland has a long and proud military tradition, unmatched by any other state. The Maryland 400 saved General Washington and the Continental Army at the Battle of Brooklyn, earning our "Old Line State" nickname and securing our country's independence. We are home to the United State Naval Academy, which has produced the greatest Naval and Marine officers the world has ever seen. Each time our nation called, Maryland has courageously answered, with 83 Marylanders earning the Congressional Medal of Honor - from former slaves, like Sergeant Augustus Walley, to the most recent recipient, Captain Florent Ahmed Groberg, who displayed unimaginable courage in attempting to thwart a suicide bomber in Afghanistan. Throughout our nation's history, Marylanders have served. I believe that when the opportunity arises to recognize these heroes and thank them, we should take it.

As a meaningful gesture of thanks and appreciation to those who have served our state and nation, I respectfully ask the Committee's favorable report on House Bill 1251.

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