

**In Support of HB 273, “Defend the Guard.”**

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House Health and Government Operations Committee:

My name is Staci Wolfson, and I am writing to you today in support of HB 273, “Defend the Guard.” I am a Baltimore native and a passionate Democrat in favor of peace.

I’ll admit that until Donald Trump’s election in 2016, I was fairly ambivalent about political matters overall. I was even more apathetic when it came to foreign policy. But if Trump’s presidency taught me anything, it is that Congress needs to step up now, more than ever, to ensure that our country stays on the right path. As a Marylander, I am proud to see that our state has the opportunity to take a step in the direction of ensuring this becomes the reality when it comes to foreign policy.

As the wife of a Purple Heart Marine veteran who is finishing his service in the National Guard, one of my biggest fears is that Trump (or someone worse) will be elected once again in 2024 and send my husband overseas to fight in a war I do not support.

Growing up, my understanding was always that Congress declared wars, the national military fought them, and states’ National Guards were at home to protect the people of their states. I have since learned this has not been the reality for many years. I am in favor of HB 273 because it pushes Congress to once again take on this role, which makes me feel that my wishes as a citizen regarding entry into war will be better represented than they would be by any given President. If Congress is not willing to declare war, then I do not think it is right that the National Guard should be deployed in support of a war it does not endorse on my behalf.

Going into year 3 of the pandemic, I think this is more relevant than ever. When I first became eligible for my COVID vaccine, I watched first-hand as the National Guard helpfully and efficiently ran a mass vaccination site at M&T Bank Stadium. If another wave overwhelms our hospitals, I want to know the National Guard is *here* to support us – not overseas fighting in a war only one man may support.

As a Democrat and a Marylander, to me, voting for HB 273 is a no-brainer. I hope you think so too.

Thanks for your consideration,

Staci Wolfson