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Members of the House Health and Government Operations Committee,

My name is Dylan Griffith, I am member of Veterans for Peace. I was born and raised In Cecil County, Maryland. I am a veteran, and served in the Helmand Province in Afghanistan. While I am now a Delaware resident, I work in Maryland and my entire family is here. I am grateful that HB273, Defend the Guard, is getting the attention it deserves. In Delaware, I work with the Defend the Guard initiative and we hope to have a bill filed shortly.

Defend the Guard provides an opportunity to put the oft used term “support the troops” into action. It is no longer good enough to use the words as a slogan, this country must defend those who are willing to go to war by making sure they are only sent into harm’s way when it is absolutely necessary. State legislatures should take this opportunity to place limits around how we intervene in foreign countries and at what expense. Maryland has this opportunity with Defend the Guard and they should use it to protect their state militia. Guardsmen are critical responders in their community before they are warfighters, and Maryland should reject the continued attempt to blur the lines and to employ them improperly.

I work in public safety in Maryland alongside many who still serve in the National Guard. They joined the Guard to support their state, and Maryland has had its share of disasters over the years where their skills and capabilities have been much needed. The Defend the Guard Act protects critical state assets so that they are available during emergencies and it protects our sons and daughters by ensuring that they if they are sent to defend this Country it is only in response to an existential threat.

I support HB 273 and am grateful to the committee for the opportunity to speak today.