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**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENT OF HB103
PROPERTY TAX CREDIT FOR DISABLED VETERANS – ESTABLISHED**

Ways & Means Committee
January 13, 2022

Chair Atterbeary, Vice-Chair Washington and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you on HB103, Property Tax Credit for Disabled Veterans Act of 2022.

The purpose of this bill is to establish a property tax credit system that allows disabled veterans to receive property tax credits on their home that correlates to their level of permanent disability. Currently under state law we are operating on an absolute basis, under which a disabled veteran in Maryland may receive a full property tax exemption on their primary residence if the veteran is 100% disabled as a result of service. While this is extremely beneficial for fully disabled veterans it does not offer any protections for veterans who suffer from less than 100% disability. This bill would allow disabled veterans to receive property tax credits for their homes that parallel with their disability percentage. For example a veteran who is 50% disabled would receive a 50% property tax credit for their home.

Since this tax credit system is already established for 100% disabled veterans we do not need to create a completely new system. We just need to create a scale for the tax credits rather than solely operating on an absolute basis.

Washington County has already implemented this legislation on a local level under its 2018 Ordinance. According to the Washington County Treasurer's office, there are 229 participants enrolled in the 0-100 percent Disabled Veterans Tax Credit program. Washington County anticipates a FY-22 reduction to revenue of \$321,140.00 as a result of this program. HB103 makes this legislation statewide. According to the Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs, there are 83,730 disabled veterans currently residing Maryland. In 2019, there were 90,276 disabled veterans. Of those veterans,

- o 24.28% have a 0-20 percent disability rating
- o 16.81% have a 30-40 percent disability rating
- o 15.39% have a 50-60 percent disability rating

- o 26.88% have a 70-90 percent disability rating
- o 16.64% have a 100 percent disability rating.

As this committee is aware, I am a U.S. Army Veteran who had the honor of serving our country in the Vietnam War. Like many of my comrades, I too have been afflicted by some of the hazards of war. Agent Orange is a defoliant that was used to remove leaves from trees and plants. The herbicide was heavily sprayed for tactical use from 1961 to 1971. It subjected several troops to numerous complications, including cancer.

While I commend the State in their current statutes that recognize and support 100% disabled veterans, we cannot neglect all of our other disabled veterans. HB103 rectifies that gap. Maryland residents whose military service resulted in some level of disability should be able to find comfort in the fact that the state of Maryland will lend a helping hand. The life of a disabled veteran is hard enough without having to worry about whether or not they'll be able to afford the roof over their heads. As a state delegate it is my responsibility to advocate for all of my constituents, including those disabled in service.

For these reasons, I am requesting a favorable report.

With kindest regards,

Benjamin Brooks