



MARYLAND MILITARY COALITION

Serving Veterans through Legislative Advocacy

February 21, 2023

The Honorable Ben Barnes
Chair, House Appropriations Committee
Maryland House of Delegates
House Office Building, Room 121
Annapolis, MD 21401

Subject: **Request for FAVORABLE Report** – HB 553 – Maryland National Guard – Tricare Premium Reimbursement Program – Establishment (Health Care for Heroes Act of 2023)

Dear Chair Barnes and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee:

On behalf of the members of the Maryland Military Coalition (MMC) and as its Legislative Director, I write to recommend a **FAVORABLE report** by the Committee on **HB 553, Maryland National Guard – Tricare Premium Reimbursement Program – Establishment (Health Care for Heroes Act of 2023)**, sponsored by Speaker Adrienne Jones by request of Governor Moore and by Delegate Mike Rogers. This bill will award grants to reimburse certain members of the National Guard for the cost of Tricare Reserve Select and Tricare Dental coverage.

Health care for members of the National Guard is a pressing concern. Many do not have private health and dental insurance. This bill would ensure that eligible members of the National Guard would be able to obtain coverage under Tricare Reserve Select and Tricare Dental programs. Providing this coverage is not only the right thing to do but also will enhance the Guard's readiness. Recruiting and retention may benefit as well.

Members of the Federal Reserve (Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps and Coast Guard) are also eligible to receive health insurance under Tricare Reserve Select. During his town hall meeting with veterans earlier this year, Governor Moore discussed supporting reimbursing Tricare Reserve Select premiums for members of the Federal Reserve.

Members of the Army and Air National Guard frequently transfer back and forth to the Army and Air Force Reserve to accept a promotion, command or new assignment. No National Guard Citizen Soldier should be forced to decline a promotion or enhanced assignment available only

HB 553 – Maryland National Guard – Tricare Premium Reimbursement Program –
Establishment (Health Care for Heroes Act of 2023)

within a Maryland Federal Reserve unit in order to keep the Tricare Reserve Select reimbursement. Typically, declining a promotion is a career-ending action.

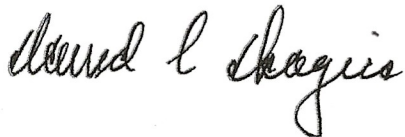
Accordingly, we look forward to working with the administration, General Assembly and other stakeholders to develop options for extending this program to Citizen Warriors of the Federal Reserve.

The Maryland Military Coalition **supports** HB 553 and asks for a ***FAVORABLE*** report from the Appropriations Committee.

The Maryland Military Coalition is a registered non-profit, non-partisan advocacy organization comprised of prominent Maryland-based veteran and military groups, representing over 150,000 service-connected individuals, including those currently serving, veterans, retirees and their families, caregivers, and survivors.

We want to thank Governor Moore for his commitment to our veterans, and to Speaker Jones and Delegate Mike Rogers for sponsoring this legislation and their strong, support of the uniformed services community in Maryland.

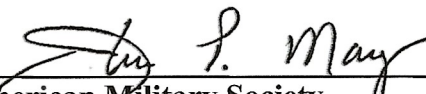
Respectfully,

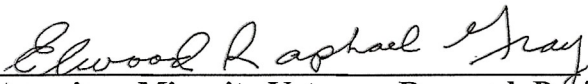
A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "David L. Dragics". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

David L. Dragics
COL USA (Ret)
Legislative Director

Member Organizations, Maryland Military Coalition


Air Force Sergeants Association

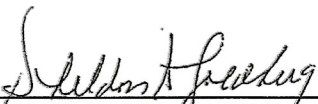

American Military Society


American Minority Veterans Research Project


Association of the United States Navy

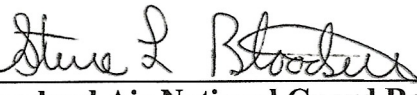

Commissioned Officers Association of the
US Public Health Service

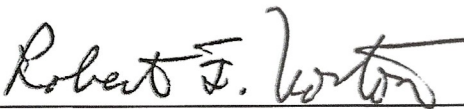

Disabled American Veterans



Distinguished Flying Cross Association



Fleet Reserve Association


Jewish War Veterans of the USA


Maryland Air National Guard Retirees'
Association


Military Officers Association of America

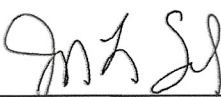

Military Order of the Purple Heart


Montford Point Marines of America



National Association for Black Veterans


Naval Enlisted Reserve Association


NOAA Association of Commissioned Officers


Reserve Organization of America


Society of Military Widows


Veterans of Foreign Wars