

Chair Atterbury, Vice Chair Wilkins, Members of the Ways and Means Committee, my name is Gloria Dent. After 27 years in the Army 4 combat tours and numerous operational deployments, I retired as a Command Sergeant Major, the highest grade as an enlisted member of our military. I come before you today to ask for your favorable support of Senate Bill 553, the Keep Our Heroes Home Act.” I am married to retired CSM Kennis Dent who served 34 years in the Army and we are the owners of Genergi Logistics, a small business that provides just in time logistics from the Port of Baltimore throughout the United States. Our workforce is very diverse, and it includes disabled veterans, returning citizens and military spouses.

After serving in the most elite force in our Military-the US Army, I spent my next 10 years as a federal employee. I can honestly say that my last position in the federal government was also my most rewarding career. From 2017-2021, I worked for the US AbilityOne Commission in a congressionally mandated position where I was directed responsible for leveraging the federal procurement system to identify defense industry procurement opportunities that could potentially employ our wounded, ill, and injured warriors. This initiative allows the men and women that have worn the cloth of our Nation to continue to serve within their community, within their state. This unique position afforded me the opportunity

to see the impact our veterans are making in their communities and moreso, making to the employer. Maryland and Virginia were among my top employers that were seeking veterans but consistently lost the battle to Florida, Texas and Pennsylvania. Why because, their retirement benefits were not taxed. The veterans I served were highly sought after for their networking capabilities, problem-solving expertise, teaming experience, reliability, and above all, their commitment to high performance.

In 2019, my husband and co-founded iCommunity Connection Services, Inc, a Maryland community-based 501(c)3 nonprofit organization with extensive expertise in navigating VA benefits and entitlements, processing applications for VA claims, and connecting veterans and family members of veterans to resources in their community. Our efforts in helping veterans access these benefits contributed to over \$10 billion dollars paid out by the federal government for Compensation claims, housing loans, education, and other benefits in Maryland in according to the VA's State by State Compensation and Pension Report for 2022. The economical impact that veterans will have on our state is worthy of this favorable tax deduction and I hope you will support this bill so many more Veterans call veteran home.

Thank you for the opportunity.