



LEGISLATIVE POSITION:

Favorable

Senate Bill 554 – Health Care for Heroes Act of 2023

Senate Finance Committee

Wednesday, March 1, 2023

Dear Chairwoman Griffith and Members of the Committee:

Founded in 1968, the Maryland Chamber of Commerce is the leading voice for business in Maryland. We are a statewide coalition of more than 6,400 members and federated partners working to develop and promote strong public policy that ensures sustained economic health and growth for Maryland businesses, employees, and families.

Senate Bill 554 establishes the Tricare Premium Reimbursement Program (the Program) in the Maryland Military Department (the Department) for the purpose of awarding grants to reimburse members of the Maryland National Guard for dental and health care premiums that they pay for themselves and their families. This legislation also requires the Department to adopt regulations to implement and administer the Program. This program we believe is essential to both the retention of our veterans and the promotion of a next generation approach to transformative health care solutions.

As health care costs continue to rise, driven by inflation and the cost of medical services and products, along with an aging U.S. population, it is more important than ever that Maryland supports our servicemen and women. This legislation provides an incentive for our National Guard members to stay in Maryland, thus allowing them to continue to provide sales tax revenue, volunteer, make charitable contributions and contribute to the State's economy.

National Guard Soldiers serve both our community and country. Jobs are a large part of the economic impact of military spending, which Maryland benefits greatly from. The Maryland Chamber supports legislation that will support and incentivize our military members to stay in the State. SB 554 provides our state with a golden opportunity to properly honor those who serve in the National Guard.

For these reasons, the Maryland Chamber of Commerce respectfully requests a **Favorable Report** on **SB 554**.