



MARYLAND MILITARY COALITION

Serving Veterans through Legislative Advocacy

February 16, 2023

The Honorable Guy Guzzone
Chair, Budget and Taxation Committee
3 West
Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Subject: **Request for FAVORABLE Report** – SB 354 - Income Tax Checkoff – Maryland Veterans Trust Fund

Dear Chair Guzzone and distinguished members of the Budget and Taxation 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 ***SB 354, Income Tax Checkoff – Maryland Veterans Trust Fund*** (Fund), sponsored by Senator Dawn Gile. This bill will provide a means for those who file an individual income tax return to make a voluntary contribution to the Fund by a checkoff on Maryland Form 502.

The Maryland Veterans Trust Fund is a 501c3 organization that provides non-emergency financial assistance to veterans and widows/widowers of veterans. The Fund receives funding from citizens, veteran service organizations, local businesses, community-sponsored fundraisers, the Maryland State Lottery, and six of the state's 15 licensed casinos. The Fund currently has extremely low visibility and public awareness. There is no known advertising or soliciting for the Fund other than its website as part of the Maryland.gov URL. This lack of knowledge by the public is reflected in the low level of donations reported annually – in 2022, just 2% of the overall donations.

Currently, the Fund's vast majority sources of revenue are from the Maryland State Lottery and the casinos. Since FY 2018, their share of annual revenue has ranged from 81% to 98%. During the same period, revenue from the public sector mentioned above has declined from a high of 19% to only 2% in FY2022.¹ At no time during this timeframe has the annual total received from this group ever been more than approximately \$22,000. The Coalition believes this level of donations needs to be changed for the betterment of the Fund in the long term.

¹ <https://msa.maryland.gov/msa/mdmanual/25ind/html/76veterans.html>, Annual Reports for Fiscal Years 2018 - 2022

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Per the Fund's website, in the last two years record assistance has been granted to veterans and widows/widowers in need of financial assistance. By including the Fund in the Contributions section of Maryland Form 502, this will create more awareness of the Fund and increase the level of giving by citizens, thereby enhancing the Fund's ability to serve its purpose of assisting with non-emergency, temporary financial challenges facing veterans or widows/widowers of veterans. In short, the more funding the Fund has, the more it can help those who apply to it for financial assistance.

The one-time cost of adding the Fund to the Contributions section of Maryland Form 502 is estimated at approximately \$79,000 in one-time computer programming expenses in the Fiscal and Policy Note for cross-filed HB 316.² The MMC believes the only additional cost would be the preparation of an advertisement that explains the purpose of the Fund in the Maryland State & Local Tax Forms & Instructions booklet prepared annually by the Comptroller of Maryland.

The Maryland Military Coalition **strongly supports** SB 354 and asks for a **FAVORABLE** report from the Budget and Taxation Committee. Providing an income tax checkoff for the Fund provides Maryland residents a convenient means to help those veterans needing its assistance.

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.

The Coalition would like to thank Senator Dawn Gile for sponsoring this legislation. We appreciate her leadership on this issue and look forward to continuing our work with her on it.

Respectfully,



David L. Dragics
COL USA (Ret)
Legislative Director

² https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/2023RS/fnotes/bil_0006/hb0316.pdf

Member Organizations, Maryland Military Coalition


Air Force Sergeants Association

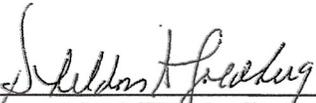

American Military Society


American Minority Veterans Research Project


Association of the United States Navy


Commissioned Officers Association of the
US Public Health Service

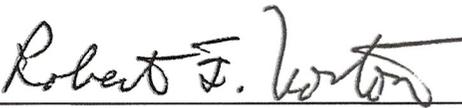

Disabled American Veterans


Distinguished Flying Cross Association


Fleet Reserve Association


Jewish War Veterans of the USA


Maryland Air National Guard Retirees'
Association

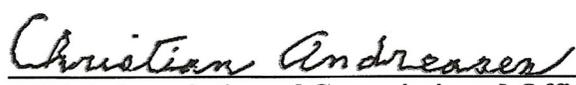

Military Officers Association of America


Military Order of the Purple Heart

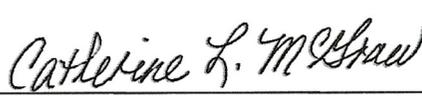

Montford Point Marines of America


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