



MARYLAND MILITARY COALITION

Serving Veterans through Legislative Advocacy

Statement of Lynn A. Nash, PhD, RN, PHCNS-BC, FAAN
CAPT (R), U.S. Public Health Service
Communications Director

HB 726 – Maryland Medical Assistance Program - Autism Waiver - Military Families
February 28, 2023

FAVORABLE

Dear Chair Pena-Melnyk and Members of the House Health and Government Operations Committee:

As the Communications Director, for the Maryland Military Coalition, and a community health nurse, I stand before you to request your favorable report for HB 726 - Maryland Medical Assistance Program - Autism Waiver - Military Families. For the record, my name is CAPTAIN Lynn Nash. I am a retired nurse, who completed over 30 years of active-duty service in both the Army and the U.S. Public Health Service. I am well acquainted with the issue. As an Army Community Health Nurse, I case managed the care of family members enrolled in the Exceptional Family Member Program, a program designed to cover the complicated care of conditions such as Autism.

Did you know that the average military family moves every 2-3 years? When the family moves, the person enrolled in the Exceptional Family Member program starts from scratch at their next duty station, trying to get enrolled in special needs programs they need and deserve.

This bill allows a child on the registry for Autism Waiver to remain on the registry when the child's family relocates out of state. The number of military bases that have significant numbers of Exceptional Family Members are generally restricted to the Services' large, medical centers, which offer a wide range of specialty care services. There are less than a dozen medical centers, strategically located across the Continental United States and Germany, of which Walter Reed, in Bethesda, is one. As a result, families often relocate around these "hubs" of care, often returning back to be reassigned at a base a number of times during the service member's careers. These medical centers, in addition to specialty care services, have case managers who ensure that both medical care and student services, such as Individual Educational Plans, are individualized to meet the need of the child. With this bill, when the family returns to Maryland, the child's eligibility for the Autism Waiver remains, allowing services to be re-initiated in a timely manner without the burden of additional paperwork.

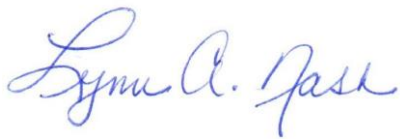
The reinstatement of service is important as services include service coordination, respite care, in-home supports, behavioral supports, parent training, home modification and other services based on the need of the child.

Children with autism require extremely stable, consistent environments to function at their best. They cannot wait for critical services, which as ARC has pointed out, the average wait is nine years. Our military families deserve better.

The Maryland Military Coalition, is a voluntary, non-partisan organization representing 19 veteran service organizations who, in turn, serve over 150,000 Maryland uniformed services men, women and their families. The Coalition strongly supports House Bill 726 and asks for your ***favorable report.***

Thank you to Delegate Feldman for sponsoring this important legislation.

Respectfully,

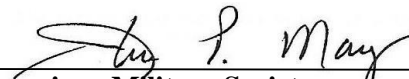
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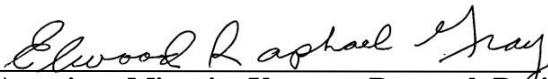
Lynn A. Nash

MMC Member Organizations Signature Page Follows

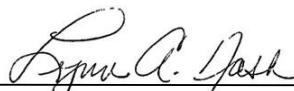
Member Organizations, Maryland Military Coalition


Air Force Sergeants Association

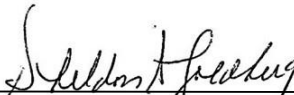

American Military Society

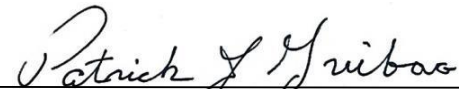

American Minority Veterans Research Project


Association of the United States Navy



Commissioned Officers Association of the
US Public Health Service

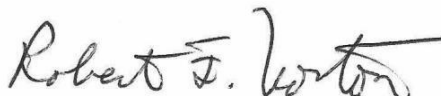

Disabled American Veterans



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