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TTY USERS CALL VIA MD RELAY

February 19, 2024

The Honorable C.T. Wilson
Chair, Economic Matters Committee
Room 231, House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: House Bill 604 - Families Serve Act of 2024 - Letter of Support

Chair Wilson, Vice Chair Crosby, and Members of the Economic Matters Committee:

On behalf of the Governor, I respectfully request a favorable report on House Bill 604, The Families Serve Act of 2024. As part of the Governor's declaration of 2024 as the Year for Military Families, this legislation acknowledges the sacrifices and support of military spouses by providing extra support in finding employment.

Due to the need to relocate, active-duty military spouses are faced with extra difficulties in maintaining a career and often experience higher rates of unemployment. The national unemployment rate for military spouses is 21%, and Maryland is home to nearly 15,000 active-duty military spouses. The first part of House Bill 604 expands hiring preferences in the private sector to spouses of full-time active military service members. Under current law, private employers are permitted to show preferences for active duty service members, veterans, spouses of veterans with a service-connected disability, and surviving spouses of deceased veterans. The expansion incentivizes private employers to hire active-duty military spouses.

The legislation also allows the Department of Budget and Management to add ten additional points to selection tests for spouses of active duty service members who apply for State jobs. Existing law allows veterans and spouses of eligible veterans or who are deceased to receive ten additional points to selection tests when applying for jobs. The bill extends the benefit to spouses of active duty service members who seek State jobs.

Military spouses and family members play critical roles behind the scenes in supporting service members. The result of their commitment to service members affects their own ability to pursue employment and careers of their own. House Bill 604 serves to help military spouses find employment, supports Maryland businesses in recruiting a talented workforce, and recognizes the sacrifice and service made to their active service member spouses.

Thank you for your consideration. If you have questions, please contact June Chung, Deputy Legislative Officer at june.chung@maryland.gov.

Sincerely,

June Chung
Deputy Legislative Officer