

# **Maryland Military Coalition HB0231 - Favorable 020**

Uploaded by: Jayson Spiegel

Position: FAV



# MARYLAND MILITARY COALITION

*Serving Veterans through Legislative Advocacy*

February 8, 2024

The Honorable Marc Korman.  
Chair, Environment and Transportation Committee  
Room 251 House Office Building  
Annapolis, MD 21401

Subject: **Request for FAVORABLE Report** – HB231 – Vehicle Laws – Special Registration Plates – Gold Star and Next of Kin Families

Dear Chair Korman and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the members of the Maryland Military Coalition (MMC) and as its President, I write to recommend a **FAVORABLE report** by the Committee on **HB0231 – Vehicle Laws – Special Registration Plates – Gold Star and Next of Kin Families**, sponsored by the Chair at the request of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

We applaud the Department of Veterans Affairs for initiating this legislation which will authorize the recipient of a Department of Defense Next of Kin lapel button to apply for special registration plates. The name and rank of the deceased service member will be displayed on the plate ensuring that the fallen warrior's name is specifically remembered.

We are gratified that the criterion for memorialization is not just a warrior who died on active duty but also a Reserve or National Guard warrior who lost their life while in drill status. Drill often involves training with weapons, heavy machinery, hazardous materials and dangerous situations. Including members of the Guard and Reserve who perish while in drill status ensures their sacrifice and name is remembered.

Finally, the MMC is very appreciative of the provision that the fees paid for the special license plates will be credited to the Maryland Veterans Trust Fund, which supports veterans and family members in need. Directing that the fees go to the Veterans Trust Fund, rather than the State general fund, represents a special way of honoring a fallen warrior by keeping the monies in the veteran community.

The bill fits into Governor Moore's commitment to make 2024 the Year of the Military Family in Maryland. As Governor Moore said in December 2023, "States have a duty to answer the service and sacrifice of our military families with strong support."

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.

We want to thank the Department of Veterans Affairs and Delegate Korman for sponsoring this legislation and their continued strong support of the uniformed services community and families in Maryland.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'JMS', written in a cursive style.

Jayson Spiegel  
LTC USAR (Ret)  
President

Member Organizations, Maryland Military Coalition

James P. Monahan  
Air Force Sergeants Association

John P. May  
American Military Society

Elwood R. Asphal Gray  
American Minority Veterans Research Project

W. W.  
Association of the United States Navy

Lynn A. Gask  
Commissioned Officers Association of the  
US Public Health Service

Wilbur B. Fisher  
Disabled American Veterans

Seldon H. Freedy  
Distinguished Flying Cross Association

Phyllis J. Collins  
Fleet Reserve Association

Seldon H. Freedy  
Jewish War Veterans of the USA

Steve L. Brooker  
Maryland Air National Guard Retirees'  
Association

Emmett R. Robert  
Maryland Veterans Chamber of Commerce

Robert J. Winton  
Military Officers Association of America

Charles E. Spahr  
Military Order of the Purple Heart

E.  
Montford Point Marines of America

M. L. Meese  
National Association for Black Veterans

Michael P. Hays  
Naval Enlisted Reserve Association

Christian Andreasen  
NOAA Association of Commissioned Officers

John S.  
Reserve Organization of America

Catherine L. McGraw  
Society of Military Widows

E.  
National Active and Retired Federal Employees  
Veterans Affairs Directorate, NARFE MD

M. Blackwell  
Veterans of Foreign Wars

# **HB231\_GoldStarPlates\_KEaton-Favorable.pdf**

Uploaded by: Ken Eaton

Position: FAV



# ABATE OF MARYLAND, INC.

*Dedicated to Freedom of the Road & Responsible Motorcycle Legislation*

To: The Honorable Marc Korman, Chairman and Members of the Environment and Transportation Committee

From: Ken Eaton, Director, Executive Director, ABATE of Maryland, Inc.

Date: February 6, 2024

Re: **HB 231** - Vehicle Laws - Special Registration Plates - Gold Star and Next of Kin Families

Position: **FAVORABLE: SUPPORT**

ABATE of Maryland, Inc. represents the approximately 121,000 on road motorcycles that are registered in Maryland. We are a state motorcycle rights organization that brings together the voices of independent riders, clubs, riding organizations, etc. We have chapters throughout the state and our members include a diverse cross-section of motorcycle riders in Maryland. A large portion of our membership includes military veterans and their families. We **SUPPORT HB 231**.

Our veterans have taken an oath that says they will support and defend this country. The very least we can do is recognize their service and help support their families.

ABATE of Maryland, Inc. **SUPPORTS HB 231** - Vehicle Laws - Special Registration Plates - Gold Star and Next of Kin Families

We urge the committee to consider a **Favorable** vote, passing this legislation and moving it to the floor for a vote.

Thank you!

Kenneth B. Eaton, Executive Director  
**ABATE of Maryland, Inc.**

# **2024\_LegislativeSession\_GoldStar\_JaniceChanceUPDAT**

Uploaded by: Janice Chance

Position: FWA

Testimony: Gold Star License Plate

HB0231

Chairman Korman, Vice Chair Boyce, and members of the Committee -

I am grateful for being given the opportunity to share why I feel that the proposed legislation, HB0231 is important and I respectfully ask the Committee for a favorable report with amendment on this bill.

I am the proud mother of Captain Jesse Melton III United States Marine Corps who was killed on September 9, 2008 while supporting combat operations in Afghanistan during Operation Enduring Freedom. After graduating with honors from Randallstown High School, he attended Messiah University, and after his freshman year he joined the Marine Corps Reserves. His dream was to change the world and make a difference that would bring God glory. He ran well and finished well. Captain Jesse Melton III lived out the Marine Corps motto "Semper Fidelis" Always Faithful.

Receiving the news that my son was killed was the worst day of my life. Although my heart was aching, I was determined that my son would receive the honor that he deserved because he made the ultimate sacrifice. Therefore, I am committed to doing all that I am able to ensure that his selfless service and sacrifice will never be forgotten. Jesse is interred among thousands of other heroes at Arlington National Cemetery.

I learned that having a Gold Star license plate is one way that I along with other Gold Star Mothers and families can honor our Heroes. My own Gold Star License plate has led to positive interactions in my life. I have been blessed to meet several other Gold Star Mothers and family members because they stopped to inquire about how they could obtain a Gold Star license plate themselves. I have also been stopped occasionally by individuals who asked about the significance of the Gold Star license plate that provided me with an opportunity to share about the meaning of the Gold Star, my fallen hero, and my mission. I believe that reducing the burden to a Gold Star license plate means having more families with this plate and may result in more conversations with people asking about the significance of the Gold Star and our heroes. Hopefully the license plate will also serve as a visual reminder that "Freedom is Not Free." I believe that passing this bill will be another opportunity for our elected leaders to demonstrate their unwavering support of Gold Star families.



Therefore, I ask the Committee for a favorable report with amendment on HB0231 to honor our Gold Star families by reducing the burden on applying for these license plates.

Thank you

# **HB 231 FAV R.Cohen testimony.pdf**

Uploaded by: Morgan Murphy

Position: FWA

Thank you **Chair Korman** and members of the **House Environmental and Transportation Committee**.

As the Deputy Secretary of Maryland's Department of Veterans Affairs, I respectfully ask the Committee for a **favorable report with an amendment on Maryland establishing Special Registration Plates for Gold Star and Next of Kin Families (House Bill 231)**.

Today, I stand before you to express our deepest gratitude and unwavering admiration for a group of individuals whose sacrifices often go unnoticed—Gold Star families. These families have paid the ultimate price, offering their loved ones in service to our nation – and their sacrifice is immeasurable.

When we speak of Gold Star families, we are referring to those who have lost a son, daughter, spouse, or close relative in the line of duty. These families bear a burden that is both profound and heart-wrenching, yet they stand resilient, a testament to the strength of the human spirit.

The gold star, symbolizing the loss of a family member in service, is a stark reminder of the sacrifices made by these extraordinary

families. It is a symbol not only of grief but also of honor and valor. Each gold star represents a life given selflessly for the ideals that define our great nation—freedom, justice, and liberty.

This legislation will go some small way toward honoring and recognizing those lives, and those families who gave the ultimate sacrifice.

I respectfully ask the Committee for a favorable report on the bill with amendment.

# **HB0231 - MVA - Vehicle Laws - Special Registration**

Uploaded by: Patricia Westervelt

Position: FWA

February 8, 2024

The Honorable Marc Korman  
Chair, House Environment and Transportation Committee  
251 House Office Building  
Annapolis MD 21401

***RE: Letter of Support with Amendment – House Bill 231 – Vehicle Laws - Special  
Registration Plates - Gold Star and Next of Kin Families***

Dear Chair Smith and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) supports House Bill 231 as an opportunity to recognize Marylanders whose loved ones have given the last full measure of devotion in service to our country.

House Bill 231 will extend the eligibility to receive Gold Star license plates to those that have received a Next of Kin lapel button and waive the fee for the plate set, along with waiving the fee for Gold Star recipients as well.

The Motor Vehicle Administration (MVA) currently offers Gold Star license plates for eligible customers and would be proud to extend that offer to Next of Kin lapel button recipients as well thanks to House Bill 231. Honoring those who gave their lives by allowing their remaining loved ones to display a reminder of that sacrifice is a worthy endeavor the MVA is eager to offer.

The Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs and the Motor Vehicle Administration have agreed on one technical amendment: to strike the requirements for customization on page three, lines 12-13, due to privacy concerns.

For these reasons, the Maryland Department of Transportation respectfully requests the Committee grant House Bill 231 and the forthcoming amendment a favorable report.

Respectfully submitted,

Christine E. Nizer  
Administrator  
Maryland Motor Vehicle Administration  
410-787-7830

Pilar Helm  
Director of Government Affairs  
Maryland Department of Transportation  
410-865-1090