

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