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Time to Serve Act of 2024: Maryland General Assembly

For Brigadier General Andrew W. Collins

Good afternoon Madam Chair, Madam Vice Chair and members of the Senate Finance Committee, I am honored to provide testimony in support of this piece of critical legislation that the Governor has proposed – the Time to Serve Act of 2024.

This legislation is a vital step towards supporting Maryland state employees who also serve in a dual capacity as citizen Soldiers and Airmen in the Maryland National Guard.

These service members I speak of ----are truly committed to serving our state both in and out of uniform - and for more than just “one weekend a month.”

The Maryland National Guard has proven **time and time** again to be more than a part-time commitment for our service members.

Even during a typical year without pandemics or civil unrest, our service members ----

Serve beyond the 2 weeks of training and 1 weekend a month - which the state's current 15 days of military leave does not fully cover. They will also respond to severe weather emergencies and attend military schools required to progress in their careers.

Currently, these state employees must choose between sacrificing personal leave or taking a leave of absence without pay to continue serving the Guard.

For example, during the recent COVID-19 response, thousands of servicemembers volunteered to step away from their civilian jobs for extended periods to protect and serve our communities.

Many of those service members were activated for nearly two years in service to our state.

The Time to Serve Act of 2024 will also grant additional latitude to our hard-working state employees performing arduous shift work, such as law enforcement officers, firefighters, and emergency medical personnel to name a few.

This legislation will also impact our efforts to recruit and retain talent in both the Maryland National Guard and the Maryland State government.

Our service members won't have to choose between their state career or military commitments when it comes to utilizing leave, making them more likely to remain in their positions and continue

to serve in their dual capacities, which I view as a victory for all involved parties.

In conclusion, I respectfully ask the Committee for a favorable report on the Time to Serve Act of 2024. Thank you for your consideration.