



MARYLAND MILITARY COALITION

Serving Veterans through Legislative Advocacy

February 21, 2024

Honorable Pam Beidle
Chair, Senate Finance Committee
3 East Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Subject: **Request for FAVORABLE Report with Amendment** – SB 697 - Maryland National Guard – Tricare Premium Reimbursement Program – Alterations

Dear Chair Beidle and members of the Finance Committee:

The Maryland Military Coalition (MMC) requests a **Favorable report with Amendment** by the Committee on ***SB 697 - Maryland National Guard – Tricare Premium Reimbursement Program – Alterations***, sponsored by Senator Gile.

Recognizing that health care for members of the National Guard is a readiness issue, the General Assembly enacted the Health Care for Heroes Act of 2023 which reimburses National Guard personnel for the cost of Tricare health, dental and vision coverage. This bill would extend the benefit by reimbursing National Guard personnel for the cost of Tricare family coverage. The program could be a useful tool if targeted to recruiting new enlistees who are struggling to pay for family health insurance and retaining personnel who are nearing completion of their initial enlistment contract.

We request an amendment to extend the Tricare Reimbursement Program to members of the Federal Reserve (Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps and Coast Guard) who are also eligible to receive health insurance under Tricare Reserve Select. During his town hall meeting with veterans last year, Governor Moore *discussed supporting* reimbursing Tricare Reserve Select premiums for members of the Federal Reserve.

Members of the Army and Air National Guard frequently transfer back and forth to the Army and Air Force Reserve to accept a promotion, command or new assignment. No National Guard Citizen Soldier should be forced to decline a promotion or enhanced assignment available only

within a Maryland Federal Reserve unit in order to keep the Tricare Reserve Select reimbursement. Typically, declining a promotion is a career ending decision.

Accordingly, we look forward to working with the administration, General Assembly and other stakeholders to develop options for extending this program to Citizen Warriors of the Federal Reserve.

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 Senator Gile for her commitment to our veterans and uniformed services community in Maryland.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jayson Spiegel". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Jayson" and last name "Spiegel" clearly distinguishable.

Jayson L. Spiegel
LTC USA (Ret)
President, Maryland Military Coalition

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. [unclear]
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 [unclear]
Distinguished Flying Cross Association

Phyllis J. Collins
Fleet Reserve Association

Seldon [unclear]
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 [unclear]
Military Order of the Purple Heart

[unclear]
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

[unclear]
Reserve Organization of America

Catherine L. McGraw
Society of Military Widows

[unclear]
National Active and Retired Federal Employees
Veterans Affairs Directorate, NARFE MD

M. Blackwell
Veterans of Foreign Wars

Member Organizations, Maryland Military Coalition

James P. Monahan
Air Force Sergeants Association

Steve P. May
American Military Society

Elwood R. Raphael Gray
American Minority Veterans Research Project

W. W. W.
Association of the United States Navy

Lynn A. Dask
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 F. Winton
Military Officers Association of America

Charles E. Spahr
Military Order of the Purple Heart

E. J.
Montford Point Marines of America

M. L. Messer
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. J.
National Active and Retired Federal Employees
Veterans Affairs Directorate, NARFE MD

M. Blackwell
Veterans of Foreign Wars