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OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

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Senator Pamela G. Beidle
Chair, Senate Committee on Finance
Miller Senate Office Building, 3 East Wing
11 Bladen St., Annapolis, MD 21401 – 1991

Remarks of
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Support of: SB 214 – AN ACT concerning Maryland Military Installation Council – Membership

Testimony

Madame chair and honorable committee members, the Department of Defense is grateful for the opportunity to support the policies reflected in Senate Bill 214, for the purpose of altering the membership of the Maryland Military Installation Council. For two decades, the Department has enjoyed a close working relationship with the Maryland Department of Commerce's Office of Military and Federal Affairs, and the members of the Council.¹

My name is Christopher Arnold. I am the Mid-Atlantic Region Liaison at the United States Department of Defense-State Liaison Office, operating under the direction of Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness.

We represent the Department and establish relationships with state leaders across the country who are concerned for troops and their families' welfare by harmonizing state and federal law and regulation on policy problems of national significance. These are identified by the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Military Departments, and the National Guard Bureau as areas where states can play a crucial role.

The policies reflected in Maryland Senate Bill 214 uniquely address the needs and challenges faced specifically by military families, and compliment several other legislative initiatives proposed as part of making 2024 the year for military families in Maryland, including expanding the Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs to the Maryland Department of Veterans and Military Families, and creating a Commission on Veterans and Military Families.²

Maryland was the first state to create a legislative authorization for a coordinating body to strengthening collaboration and communication between the state and military installations, the

¹ https://dlslibrary.state.md.us/publications/Exec/DC/EC11-207_2021.pdf

² <https://governor.maryland.gov/news/press/pages/governor-moore-announces-first-items-in-2024-legislative-agenda-to-support-and-empower-maryland-military-families.aspx>

Maryland Military Installation Council, ultimately benefitting service members, families, and local communities.³ This approach has been emulated by other states.⁴

The Maryland Military Installation Council facilitates direct communication and resource sharing between state agencies, military installations, and community organizations, leading to more efficient problem-solving and better-coordinated support services for military families.⁵ The Council's mandate to foster relationships between installations, state agencies and localities has become increasingly important as defense priorities evolve.⁶

Senator William Smith and Delegate Carl Jackson are legislative representatives to the Maryland Military Installation Council. The Council is supported by several defense alliances and receives quarterly updates from the Defense-State Liaison Office; the Office of Local Defense Community Cooperation; the Adjutant General of Maryland; the commanding officers of Naval Air Station Pax River, Naval Support Activity Bethesda, Naval Support Activity Annapolis, Naval Surface Warfare Center Carderock, and Naval Support Activity South Potomac; the garrison commanders at Aberdeen Proving Ground, Fort Detrick, and Fort Meade; and the installation commander of Joint Base Andrews.

Senate Bill 214 directly addresses the Department of Defense's state policy priority of integrating military family perspectives into state governance structures, to ensure that military families have a voice in decisions that affect their lives.⁷ This involvement ensures that state policies and initiatives are well-rounded, considerate of military family needs, and effective in enhancing the quality of life for these communities.⁸

Including the Commissioner of the Education on the Council fosters collaboration on dependent education issues impacting military children, such as school enrollment, special education, implementation of the Military Interstate Children's Compact, and child care access, alleviating burdens on families and promoting smoother transitions between states.⁹

Adding a military spouse member to the Council brings the unique perspective and needs of military families directly to the table, ensuring their voices are heard and informing policy decisions that impact their daily lives.¹⁰

³ <https://msa.maryland.gov/msa/mdmanual/26excom/html/23military.html>

⁴ <https://www.denix.osd.mil/sri/tools/sismrs/smc/>

⁵ <https://commerce.maryland.gov/commerce/SiteAssets/boards-and-commissions/military-installation-council/MMIC%20Meeting%20Minutes%20-%209-12-2022%20%28FINAL%209-20-22%29.pdf>

⁶ National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. "Strengthening the military family readiness system for a changing American society." (2019). <https://nap.nationalacademies.org/read/25380/chapter/4>

⁷ <https://download.militaryonesource.mil/StatePolicy/pdfs/2024/discussionpoints-militarycommunityrepresentationstateboardsandcouncils.pdf>

⁸ On July 20, 2023, Deputy Secretary of Defense Kathleen Hicks said "When we take care of our people—our service members and their families—they can focus on their mission to defend the nation. Taking care of our people's basic needs and improving the quality of life of our service members have a direct impact on military readiness."

⁹ <https://download.militaryonesource.mil/StatePolicy/pdfs/2024/bestpractices-militarycommunityrepresentationstateboardsandcouncils.pdf>

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

Maryland is home to 77,000 service members and their families.¹¹ Without direct representation on state boards and councils, youth and spouse priorities risk being deprioritized. Expanding the purview and composition of the council will broaden its understanding of the diverse challenges and opportunities faced by military installations and their surrounding communities, empowering the Council to advocate more effectively for policies that support both military and civilian interests.¹²

On behalf of the Department of Defense, we are extraordinarily grateful to Governor Moore for introducing this important legislation, to the members of the Maryland Military Installation Council for our decades-long alignment, and to the members of the Senate Finance Committee for your thoughtful consideration of the policies reflected in this bill.

The Department of Defense looks forward to enjoying future partnership with the Maryland Military Installation Council in its expanded role and scope, as well as with the Maryland General Assembly, as we pursue our shared mission to succeed through teamwork in support of our service members and their families.

Yours etc.,

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¹¹ Defense Manpower Data Center, December 31, 2022.

¹² <https://statepolicy.militaryonesource.mil/priorities/military-community-representation-on-state-boards-and-councils>