

In **Support** of **HB 0299**, “Defend the Guard.”

Scott Spaulding
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District 46

House Health and Government Operations Committee,

2024 is Governor Moores’ year of the military family. But this year about 1000 Maryland Guard members will be separated from their families and sent to combat.

My name is Scott Spaulding; I am a lifelong Marylander, veteran of four combat deployments, Purple Heart recipient, member of the Air National Guard, Baltimore County teacher, and lacrosse coach. But this March I will abruptly cease my service to Baltimore county because I will be sent to the Middle east.

I am strongly in **support of HB0299**. The thrust of the bill is to restrict the use of the National Guard to only declared wars. This would serve to protect your constituents. This bill is non-partisan and imposes no costs on Maryland. It is part of a nationwide non-partisan effort introduced in many states.

This bill does not interfere in any way with the ability of the Governor or the President to respond to domestic emergencies, in fact it explicitly states that the guard may be called forth to suppress insurrection and provide support to civil authorities. Passing this bill may ensure that Maryland’s guard is more available to serve Maryland. Maryland's Air Guard was nearly sent to Afghanistan in spring 2019, would not have been available for covid response. In 2020 Maryland’s Guard had 3 units deployed to Afghanistan for the better part of a year.

Consider the situation of Louisiana’s guard, after returning from a year in Syria the Louisiana guard was pulled directly into covid response and struggled with burnout. The headline read, “Breakneck Pace of Crises Keeps National Guard Away from Home.” The Louisiana guard was also in Iraq when Katrina hit, there was no consideration by DOD about pulling them away in hurricane season. The delayed response to the crisis was a result of the scramble to get other states guards to respond. This bill would enable the state to keep its guard home when needed.

When Maryland’s Guard is deployed high-needs schools will be deprived of teachers, sports teams will lose coaches, do without policemen, volunteer firefighters, and electricians, among other members of the community. If there is a weather emergency, the Guard will be unavailable to help. All of these effects will be dispersed throughout the community, and nothing will be gained. This only scratches the surface of the reasons I favor this bill and I hope that you will too.

Thank you very much,

Scott M. Spaulding