



Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs Office of the Secretary

WES MOORE
GOVERNOR

ARUNA MILLER
LT. GOVERNOR

ANTHONY C. WOODS
SECRETARY

January 19, 2024

The Honorable Joseline A. Peña-Melnyk
Chair, Health and Government Operations Committee
Room 241, House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: HB 55 - Maryland Commission on Veterans and Military Families

Dear Chairwoman Peña-Melnyk and Committee Members,

The Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs supports HB 55 - Maryland Commission on Veterans and Military Families.

The MDVA believes veterans and active service members are more likely to thrive in Maryland when their families are healthy and resilient. It is for this reason we launched Maryland Joins Forces which is an initiative designed to mobilize partners across sectors to meaningfully address issues affecting veteran and military families.

This commission will develop and implement a plan to make Maryland the best state for veterans & military families. Particularly solutions that address the following:

- **Employment:** Reduce military spouses' unemployment and make it easier for them to transition to the state without disruptions to their careers.
- **Food and Housing:** Ensure no military-connected family experiences food insecurity and eliminate homelessness amongst veteran families.
- **Education:** Members of the military-connected community gain the skills and credentials they need to find meaningful employment and contribute to a thriving Maryland economy and military-connected kids are able to integrate seamlessly into Maryland K-12 schools.
- **Health & Wellness:** Military-connected families live healthier lives - both physically and mentally with increased access to health and wellness resources.
- **Service:** Increase the number of opportunities for members of the military-connected community to serve alongside their non-military-connected neighbors to reduce the civil-military divide.

THE WINELAND BUILDING, FOURTH FLOOR
16 FRANCIS STREET, ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

TOLL FREE: 866-793-1577 • ANNAPOLIS: 410-260-3838 • FAX: 410-216-7928

veterans.maryland.gov
TTY USERS CALL VIA MD RELAY

Passing this bill will help us maintain Governor Moore's pledge to make 2024 the Year for Military Families. We look forward to working with this commission to design, study, develop, and implement solutions to pressing challenges within the military-connected community.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Anthony Woods". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "A" and "W".

Anthony C. Woods
Secretary