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

RE: House Bill 55 - Maryland Commission on Veterans and Military Families - Favorable

Dear Chair Pena Melnyk, and Members of the Committee,

I am writing on behalf of the Army Alliance, a nonprofit advocacy organization whose sole mission is to provide support for one of our major military installations in the State – the Aberdeen Proving Ground (APG). From its founding in 1917, APG has grown into the central research facility for the United States Army, one of a number of such military installations in our State.

The defense industry is one of the most important elements of our State economy. Anchored by major installations such as APG, the industry provides a large number of professional, highly compensated jobs for those who work in uniform and the substantially higher number of private sector individuals who support them. Within the APG ecosystem, for example, there are approximately 2,000 uniform military personnel supported by over 20,000 civilian support staff. APG and its surrounding defense community comprise the largest employer in Northeastern Maryland.

House Bill 55 represents a new legislative initiative in support of the defense community in Maryland. By identifying the primary mission of developing *and implementing* (emphasis added) a strategic plan to make Maryland the best State for veterans and military families, the bill clearly states its simple goal. The bill therefore represents, for the first time in memory, a public statement of our collective commitment to constant improvement of State policies to achieve this status. Importantly, the bill also is structured to measure performance by comparing Maryland to other states.

The Army Alliance enthusiastically supports both the object of the bill and the metrics by which its future performance will be measured. We respectfully request a favorable report on House Bill 55.

Very truly yours,



Bryson F. Popham

cc: Mike Ray, President, Army Alliance
Jill McClune, Past President, Army Alliance
Lisa Swoboda, Senior Director, Office of Military & Federal Affairs Maryland