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HOUSE BILL 55: Maryland Commission on Veterans and  
Military Families  
January 19, 2024  
POSITION: Letter of Information

The Arc Maryland is the largest statewide advocacy organization dedicated to protecting and advancing the rights and quality of life of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

We recently attended a meeting with the member of the Department of Veterans Affairs that included a Gold Star wife and mother of a 2 year-old with developmental disabilities and special healthcare needs. She addressed the issues faced by Maryland's Military and Civilian families in accessing care, services, and special support for their children. She, and another meeting attendee who is the mother of a child with specialized healthcare needs, shared personal stories that highlighted various challenges faced by Maryland families and the systemic barriers that hinder their access to healthcare and services.

Issues faced by Military families are similar to the general population in many ways, but often amplified for military families with disabled children who are often less connected upon moving to the state, and less aware of what services exist/how to access them. We identified two main areas for improvement:

1. Improving access to information about existing resources for families with disabled loved ones.
2. Exploring steps that can be taken in Maryland to enhance access to systems, such as making Medicaid and related resources more accessible, reducing administrative burdens on families, and improving support for caregivers.

We appreciate the addition of "Military Families" to the name of this commission and the commitment to families as a base of stability for our Veterans. We hope that membership on the commission may be expanded to include a military spouse with a disabled child; to aid the commission in its important work to make Maryland the best state for veterans and military families who have children with and without disabilities.

Sincerely,  
Ande Kolp, Executive Director  
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