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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**Testimony in Support of SB0411 - Department of Veterans Affairs - Renaming and Deputy Secretary of Military Family Policy and Programs**

Madame Chair, Madame Vice Chair, and Members of the House Health and Government Operations Committee:

SB0411 would rename the Department of Veteran Affairs (MDVA) to the Department of Veterans and Military Families (DVMF). The bill also requires the Secretary to appoint a Deputy Secretary of Military Family Policy and Programs to manage related initiatives to promote Maryland's goal of being the best state for veterans and their families.

As a former military family advocate and the spouse of a veteran, this bill is near and dear to me. While our state provides existing support to military families, I know there is so much more we could be doing. By changing the name of the MDVA, we are ensuring the Department lives up to its existing mission to provide support to military families. This name change also invites military families to look to the Department for the support it already provides. And with the creation of a new Deputy Secretary of Military Family Policy and Programs, this bill will provide the Department with the capacity to significantly expand programming and resources to military families.

Per the Fiscal Note, additional funding to the Department would be required to fill the new position. While I know this is a difficult budget year, I look forward to working with the Governor's office, the Department of Budget and Management, and the Budget and Taxation Committee to find the resources for this position.

SB0411 is in the same posture as its crossfile, HB0431, which passed this committee and the full House.

This bill furthers Maryland's goal to be the best state for veterans and military families. For these reasons, I respectfully request a favorable report on SB0411.