



Wes Moore | Governor  
Aruna Miller | Lt. Governor  
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Dana Burl, Deputy Secretary  
Maryland Department of Veterans and Military Families  
TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF Senate Bill 491  
Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee  
February 20, 2025

Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 491.

Maryland has long been a leader in supporting those who have served our nation. However, too many Veterans have been denied access to state benefits due to the nature of their discharge that, in many cases, resulted from circumstances beyond their control.

Senate Bill 491 ensures that Veterans who were discharged due to conditions stemming from **post-traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injury, or military sexual trauma**, are still entitled to state benefits.

PTSD, TBI, and military sexual trauma (MST) are often the invisible wounds of war and service, impacting behavior, decision-making, and overall well-being. Too often, instead of receiving the care and support they needed, these Veterans were simply discharged - stripping them of the very benefits meant to help them recover.

This bill acknowledges the reality of these injuries and ensures that Maryland does not deny benefits to those whose discharges were the result of service-connected trauma, not misconduct.

DVMF is committed to supporting these veterans. We have established an MOU with the University of Baltimore Bob Parsons Veterans Advocacy Clinic to refer Maryland veterans with other than honorable discharges to seek legal assistance at the federal level. This bill will ensure recourse and access to benefits at the state level. By passing Senate Bill 491, Maryland is taking a stand for **fairness, justice, and the well-being of all who have served**. This legislation reaffirms our state's unwavering and inclusive commitment to its veterans.

I urge the committee to support Senate Bill 491 and ensure that all Maryland veterans receive the dignity, recognition, and benefits they have earned.