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Education, Energy, and the
Environment Committee

Joint Committee on the Chesapeake and
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The Senate of Maryland

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SB 114 - Maryland Department of Labor - Licenses - Notation of Veteran Status and Eligibility for Benefits

I am Senator Bryan Simonaire presenting SB 114.

I worked with the **Department of Labor** and **the military community** on this consensus legislation. It basically allows a veteran to put a 'Veteran notation' on their professional Labor license.

First, let me say this is enabling legislation for all its departmental licensing boards, and setups the framework if the Department implements it on one or more of its boards.

I have **worked with the Department** and **flexibility is key** to success and this bill provides that flexibility.

This bill does two main things:

- 1) Enables one or more of the Department's licensing boards to issue a professional license or certificate with the **"Veteran" notation** placed on it, and
- 2) If enabled, it establishes an outreach to the veteran if they want the Veteran notation and the applicant consents to being contacted by appropriate Executive Branch agencies regarding the applicant's eligibility for State or federal veterans' benefits.

This may sound familiar as this is what is done for the **MVA driver licenses**. Driver license applicants can have a veteran's notation placed on their driver license and be contacted by the Department of Veterans and Military Families regarding available veteran benefits.

The only difference is that this **legislation is enabling**.

The advantage to this approach is the **Department knows** which boards this would work on best and could even **pilot it on a few** before rolling it out on more or all their boards.

While the **MVA program has been hugely popular**, Maryland has a long way to go to reach our veterans as **less than 50%** of our veteran population is taking advantage the MVA program.

That's why it is imperative we **use as many methods** as possible to reach out to our veterans. This legislation provides one more tool to reach out to veterans while also providing additional benefits to the veteran community.

Additionally, in Maryland, we are looking to do everything we can to help reduce veteran suicide. One of the key factors is avoiding **isolation**.

This legislation provides multiple benefits, including reducing isolation:

1. This will help with **networking and reducing isolation** as more people including other veterans will see these licensees are veterans and hopefully reach out more to them.
 - a. One of the many factors of **veterans' suicide is isolation** especially as it pertains to a veterans' own service and experiences. This will allow for public awareness of veterans through thanking them for their service, other veterans seeing it and talking with them and re-enforcing they are **not alone**.
2. It provides **another tool to reach out** to our veteran population with their consent through using their contact information to share eligible benefits with them,
3. It is another avenue for the public to **show appreciation** for their service, and
4. Lastly, it also provides **potential financial benefits** to our veteran as many customers are more likely to hire a veteran, repeat as a customer or just give a bigger tip for their service, where applicable.

If you think about it, **you can't beat this is a low-cost investment** with all its potential benefits.

For all these reasons, I ask for your favorable consideration.