



**Maryland Department of Veterans and Military Families  
Office of the Secretary**

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**Senate Bill 6 - State Government - Veterans and Military Families Ombudsman - Establishment  
OPPOSE**

January 27, 2025

The Honorable Brian J. Feldman  
Chair, Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee  
Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Chair Feldman and Committee Members,

The Maryland Department of Veterans and Military Families (DVMF) is committed to leading veterans and their families through life's transitions, making Maryland the best state for the military-connected communities. DVMF fulfills its mission through five core programs: the Service and Benefits Program, which helps veterans access federal, state, and local earned benefits; Charlotte Hall Veterans Home, offering assisted living and skilled nursing care; the Cemetery and Memorial Program, providing dignified resting places and maintaining memorials honoring Maryland's veterans; the Communications, Outreach, and Advocacy Program, fostering connection and awareness; and the Maryland Veterans Trust Fund, offering financial assistance to veterans and their families in need. These programs reflect Maryland's commitment to honoring and empowering its military-connected community.

Although the department opposes SB6, we appreciate Delegate Miller and Senator Salling's intention to establish an ombudsman within our department to serve as a resource for veterans. However, this proposed position duplicates functions that the Maryland Department of Veterans and Military Families (DVMF) already fulfills through its established Communications, Outreach, and Advocacy Program (COA) and the Constituent Services Program. Additionally, the department already provides direct support through existing toll-free numbers: 1-866-793-1577, the main department office number, and 1-800-446-4926 ext. 6450, which connects individuals directly to our Constituent Services Program. These resources ensure that veterans and their families can access the support they need without additional duplicative roles.

The Constituent Services Program is a vital resource for veterans, service members, and their families, offering comprehensive assistance in navigating benefits and addressing critical needs. In the past year alone, the program has successfully resolved 739 cases encompassing issues such as obtaining DD214 records, coordinating appointments with service offices, providing emergency financial assistance, addressing housing insecurity, and accessing state veterans' benefits. Nearly 70% of inquiries come

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directly from veterans, while 20% originate from their family members, underscoring the program's broad reach and effectiveness. Moreover, the program's most common assistance requests-accessing VA benefits and financial support-align closely with the proposed duties of the ombudsman.

Establishing a separate ombudsman role would not only create redundancy but could lead to confusion for constituents about where to seek assistance. Additionally, the associated administrative and operational costs would divert resources from existing programs that already deliver results.

Thank you for your consideration of these concerns. I urge the committee to oppose Senate Bill 6.

Sincerely,

Anthony C. Woods  
Secretary