



MARYLAND MILITARY COALITION

Serving Veterans through Legislative Advocacy

January 21, 2025

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

Subject: Request **FAVORABLE Report with Amendment** – SB0275 – Modernization of Military Laws Act

Dear Chair Feldman and distinguished members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee:

On behalf of the members of the Maryland Military Coalition (MMC), I write to recommend a **FAVORABLE report with Amendment** by the Committee on **SB0275 – Modernization of Military Laws Act**, sponsored by Senator Bryan Simonaire. This bill will update selective Articles of the Maryland Code through the adoption, integration, and proper use of definitions related to the uniformed services found in 10 U.S. Code § 101 and 37 U.S. Code § 101. Our recommendation of a FAVORABLE report with Amendment, however, is based on the definition of “veteran” being proposed in the bill compared with that in § 1-117, Veteran, of the State Government Article of the Maryland Code.

General Provisions § 1-117 defines a veteran as an individual “eligible under 38 U.S. Code § 101, a member of the commissioned corps of: (1) the Public Health Service; or (2) the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration or its predecessor, the Coast and Geodetic Survey.” The language that is proposed in Article – State Government § 9-901 (M) uses the definition of “veteran” found in 38 U.S. Code § 101, which states that the “term ‘veteran’ means a person who served in the active military, naval, air, or space service, and who was discharged or released therefrom under conditions other than dishonorable.” As such, **38 U.S. Code § 101 excludes the commissioned corps of both the Public Health Service (PHS) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and is contrary to the definition in General Provisions § 1-117.** The MMC believes the adoption of this language eliminates as veterans those who served honorably with PHS and NOAA. **We respectfully request that language be amended to read that “veteran has the meaning stated in § 1-117 of the General Provisions Article.**

The Maryland Military Coalition **strongly supports SB0275** and asks for a **FAVORABLE report with Amendment** from the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee. Making the Maryland Code consistent with the U.S. Code for key terms related to the uniformed services will decrease their misuse in future legislation and policymaking.

The Maryland Military Coalition is a registered non-profit, non-partisan advocacy organization comprised of 22 prominent Maryland-based veteran and military groups, representing over 150,000 service-connected individuals, including those currently serving, veterans, retirees and their families, caregivers and survivors. Visit our website at <https://mdmilcoalition.org/>.

We want to thank Senator Simonaire for sponsoring this legislation and his support of the uniformed services community in Maryland.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David L. Dragics". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized 'D' and 'D'.

David L. Dragics
COL (Ret), U.S. Army
Legislative Director