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Budget and Taxation Committee

Public Safety, Transportation,
and Environment Subcommittee



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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

Chair Brian J. Feldman

Vice Chair Cheryl C. Kagan

2 West Miller Senate Office Building

Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Chair, Vice Chair, and members of the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee, thank you for the opportunity to present Senate Bill 6 - Veterans and Military Families Ombudsman – Establishment.

Senate Bill 6 establishes the Veterans and Military Families Ombudsman within the Department of Veterans and Military Families. This Ombudsman will be a dedicated and impartial resource to our veterans and will help them navigate and access the services and support they deserve.

The Ombudsman will serve as a direct point of contact and source of knowledge for veterans and military families, providing information on their rights and eligibility for services, as well as pointing veterans to programs at both the state and federal level. The Ombudsman will also work with other entities, including private organizations, to ensure that services are provided as intended. This bill also requires that the ombudsman establish a toll-free number in English and other appropriate languages, that will allow veterans and their families to easily connect with someone who can provide assistance.

The Ombudsman shall be appointed by the Secretary of the Department for a five-year term. This position shall be filled by a veteran, which ensures that the ombudsman has the necessary experience and understanding of the veteran community's needs.

To conclude, our veterans have given us so much. It is only right that we give back to them by providing the greatest possible access to the services they and their families have earned. Thank you for the opportunity to present this bill and I urge a favorable committee report.

Sincerely,

Senator Johnny Ray Salling

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Johnny Ray Salling".