

**Testimony of Rear Admiral Chad Cary
Director, NOAA Commissioned Corps
Before the Maryland Education, Energy, and Environment Committee**

SB275 – Modernization of Military Laws Act

January 23, 2025, 1pm

Good afternoon distinguished members of the Maryland Education, Energy, and Environment Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I am Rear Admiral Chad Cary, the Director of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Commissioned Officer Corps (NOAA Corps).

The NOAA Corps, headquartered in Silver Spring, Maryland, is a vital yet less familiar branch of our nation's uniformed services. Comprising a dedicated team of nearly 364 mariners, aviators, engineers, and scientists, our officers operate a fleet of 15 research ships, 10 aircraft and numerous uncrewed systems.

On a daily basis, we execute scientific missions that directly impact the nation's safety, economy, and environmental health. We fly into hurricanes to gather real-time weather data that save lives and property. We map the ocean floor to support safe navigation and sustainable resource management.

Here in Maryland, our highly skilled officers supported the rapid creation of safe, alternate shipping routes following the tragic bridge collapse in Baltimore, through data collection both from the water and by aircraft. NOAA Corps officers stationed in Maryland map the dynamic Chesapeake Bay on a regular basis.

In short, we close the gap between scientific research and operational execution, delivering actionable environmental intelligence to decision-makers and the public, here in Maryland and across the nation.

I want to extend my appreciation to Senator Simonaire and the co-sponsors of this comprehensive legislative package. Your diligent work will result in modernizing Maryland's military laws, which will have a profound and lasting impact not only on the NOAA Corps but on all eight uniformed services. This is an historic effort to bring fairness, clarity, and consistency to support those who have sworn an oath to serve our nation. It will reinforce Maryland's role as a leader in supporting the men and women who dedicate their lives to public service.

In closing, on behalf of the NOAA Corps, thank you for your support of the uniformed services and this opportunity to testify.

I look forward to answering any questions the committee may have.