

2025 SB0237 Testimony For 2025-02-06.pdf

Uploaded by: Alan Lang

Position: FAV

SB0237 – Favorable

Honorable Senators

I support:

- expanding eligibility for burial in a State veterans' cemetery to include members of the National Guard and the military reserves;
- removing the residency requirement for certain veterans for burial in a State veterans' cemetery; and
- establishing a burial fee equal to the annual plot allowance established by the National Cemetery Administration for National Guard and military reserves service members and their eligible dependents.

Please enter a favorable report for SB0237.

Alan Lang
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Legislative District 30B
February 6, 2025

SB 237 - ARMY ALLIANCE - FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Bryson Popham

Position: FAV

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February 4, 2025

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

RE: Senate Bill 237 - State Government – Veterans – Burial at State Veterans' Cemeteries (Burial Equity Act) - FAVORABLE

Dear Chairman Feldman and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the Army Alliance, I wish to express its support for Senate Bill 237. The Army Alliance is a nonprofit advocacy organization whose sole mission is to provide support for one of our major military installations in the State – the Aberdeen Proving Ground (APG). From its founding in 1917, APG has grown into the central research facility for the United States Army, one of a number of such military installations in our State.

The defense industry is one of the most important elements of our State economy. Anchored by major installations such as APG, the industry provides a large number of professional, highly compensated jobs for those who work in uniform and the substantially higher number of private sector individuals who support them. Within the APG ecosystem, for example, there are approximately 2,000 uniform military personnel supported by over 20,000 civilian support staff. APG and its surrounding defense community comprise the largest employer in Northeastern Maryland.

This legislation is an important expression of support for the community of military veterans in our State. In recent years, the General Assembly has expressly recognized the contribution that veterans make to our state economy and to our citizens. This bill is yet another expression that will honor their service.

For these reasons, we support Senate Bill 237.

Very truly yours,



Bryson F. Popham

SB0237_MDVCC_Kilbane_FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Matthew Kilbane

Position: FAV

Letter of Support for SB0237 State Government – Veterans – Burial at State Veterans' Cemeteries (Burial Equity Act)

Matthew H. Kilbane
Legislative Director
Maryland Veterans Chamber of Commerce
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16JAN2025

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

Dear Chairperson Feldman and Members of the Committee,

We support SB0237 "State Government – Veterans – Burial at State Veterans' Cemeteries (Burial Equity Act)" currently under your committee's review. As the Legislative Director of the Maryland Veterans Chamber of Commerce, we advocate for policies that benefit Veterans and their families.

This bill seeks to expand eligibility for burial in State Veterans' cemeteries to include members of the National Guard and military reserves, remove the residency requirement for certain Veterans, and establish a burial fee equal to the annual plot allowance set by the National Cemetery Administration for National Guard and military reserves service members and their eligible dependents.

This Act honors the service and sacrifices of all military members, ensuring equitable burial rights for the National Guard and Reserve members alongside active-duty Veterans. It acknowledges their contributions and provides a dignified resting place for them and their families.

We urge the committee to favorably consider the Burial Equity Act for the positive impact on our Veteran community. The Maryland Veterans Chamber of Commerce is ready to assist in its passage and implementation. Thank you for your attention. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Matthew Kilbane



Legislative Director,
Maryland Veterans Chamber of Commerce

Russ Ware SB237 Support.pdf

Uploaded by: Russell Ware

Position: FAV

Russ Ware, DVMF Cemetery and Memorial Program Director
TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF Senate Bill 237
Burial Equity Act
Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
February 6, 2025

Good afternoon, Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and distinguished members of the committee.

I am Russ Ware, the Director of Cemetery & Memorial Programs for the Maryland Department of Veterans & Military Families, and I am here today to speak in favor of SB237 as amended, which will allow National Guardsmen and members of the military reserves to be buried in our state veteran cemeteries, along with their eligible family members. It also removes the state residency requirement for veteran interments, which is necessary for our State to receive VA cemetery grants, as well as for the eligible dependents of out-of-state veterans.

I served 25 years of active duty in the United States Air Force, and during that time, I witnessed firsthand the incredible sacrifices made by National Guardsmen and Reservists. Their dedication to our country is no less significant than that of active-duty personnel, and it's time that we recognize their sacrifices by providing them with the honor of being buried in a state veteran cemetery.

While the federal government provides burial rights for veterans, it does not currently extend this same privilege to Guardsmen and Reservists. This bill will share that privilege and will also remove the existing requirement for veterans to be current or previous Maryland state residents, a change that is necessary to meet the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' eligibility criteria for cemetery grants. This change ensures that all veterans who have served, regardless of where they call home, and their eligible dependents, have access to burial benefits and places a greater focus on honoring their service rather than their residency.

Passing this bill will not only generate revenue for the state cemetery program by regaining the ability to apply for federal cemetery expansion grants but will also help sustain the system and ensure its continued operation for future generations. Also, the program will receive federal funding to cover the costs of out-of-state veterans' burials; however, there will be a financial impact on state funds for the burials of out-of-state dependents, the cost of supporting the growth and expansion of the cemetery program by extending benefits to dependents of out-of-state veterans.

By supporting this bill, Maryland demonstrates that we honor the service of all veterans, whether they served on active duty, the Reserves, or the National Guard. I respectfully ask for a favorable report on SB237 as amended, as it ensures that all who served this nation are given the respect and dignity they have earned.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Oral Testimony _ Maryland Military Coalition FAVOR

Uploaded by: Lynn Nash

Position: FWA



MARYLAND MILITARY COALITION

Serving Veterans through Legislative Advocacy

Statement of CAPT Lynn Nash
SB 237 – Burial Equity Act
February 6, 2025

FAVORABLE With Amendment

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan and Distinguished Members of the Senate Education, Energy and the Environment Committee:

For the record, my name is Lynn Nash. I am a 30 year retiree with service in both the Army and the U.S. Public Health Service and the Communications Director for the Coalition.

I'm pleased to say that I am starting out in front of your committee this session with a bill that has no cost. Let's hope that I can keep it up.

House Bill HB 138, the Burial Equity Act, is a valuable measure. The bill seeks to clarify existing eligibility for burial in State cemeteries for members of the National Guard and Military Reserves. However, the current bill language is exclusive and needs amendment.

The Department of Veterans and Military Families (DVMF) follows the eligibility requirements of the VA National Cemetery. This legislation clarifies that members who served full-time in the Commissioned Corps of the U.S. Public Health Service or the Commissioned Corps of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administrations are veterans, as stated in Maryland Code, General Provisions § 1-117 and Title 38 U.S. Code § 101.

Further, the bill includes service members who have completed their contractual obligations as a member of the National Guard or the **"Military Reserves"** (emphasis added) under honorable terms. As written, the bill is exclusive. The use of the term "military reserves" includes only members of the Army, Navy, Marines, Air Force and Space Force. It excludes members of the Coast Guard (Department of Homeland Security) and the Ready Reserve of the U.S. Public Health Service (Department of Health and Human Services) who are federal reservists. To exclude these reservists who volunteer and place their lives on the line daily, does a huge disservice to them and their family members.

The Coalition seeks an amendment to correct this disservice. Instead of using the term "military reserves" we ask that the bill be modified to "federal reserve" which includes the reserves of the Army, Navy, Marines, Air Force, Space Force, as well as the Coast Guard and the Ready Reserve of the Commissioned Corps of the U.S. Public Health Service. This language keeps in the spirit of the Governor's "leave no man behind" and conforms to the DVMF-preferred use of the term "Uniformed Services".

This bill has no fiscal consequence. Veterans and their spouses and dependents are currently not charged for burial. This legislation continues the practice of collecting a burial fee for National Guard and Reservists equal to the annual plot allowance established by the National Cemetery Administration. That fee currently is \$948.00.

We support the intent of HB 767 and ask for a FAVORABLE report with amendment to truly create the Burial Equity Act, by including both the National Guard and ALL federal reservists.

The Maryland Military Coalition is a registered non-profit, non-partisan advocacy organization comprised of 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.

We want to thank the Department of Veterans and Military Families and Governor Moore for their on-going support of ALL of the uniformed services community in Maryland.

SB 237 Written Testimony _ Maryland Military Coali

Uploaded by: Lynn Nash

Position: FWA



MARYLAND MILITARY COALITION

Serving Veterans through Legislative Advocacy

February 6, 2025

The Honorable Bryan J. Feldman
The Honorable Cheryl C. Kagan
Education, Energy and the Environment Committee
2 West Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Subject: Request for a **FAVORABLE Report with Amendments - SB 237** – State Government – Veterans – Burial at State Veterans' Cemeteries ("**Burial Equity Act**")

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan and Distinguished Members of the Senate Education, Energy and the Environment Committee:

SB 237, "State Government – Veterans – Burial at State Veterans' Cemeteries (Burial Equity Act)", is a valuable measure. This no-cost legislation, sponsored by the Department of Veterans and Military Families and Governor Moore, seeks to clarify existing eligibility for burial in State cemeteries for members of the National Guard and Military Reserves. However, the current bill language is exclusive and needs amendment.

The Department of Veterans and Military Families (DVMF) follows the eligibility requirements of the VA National Cemetery. This legislation clarifies that members who served full-time in the Commissioned Corps of the U.S. Public Health Service or the Commissioned Corps of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administrations are **veterans**, as stated in Maryland – General Provisions § 1-117 and Title 38 U.S. Code § 101. Further, the bill includes service members who have completed their contractual obligations as a member of the National Guard or the "**Military Reserves**" (emphasis added) under honorable terms. The use of the term "military reserves" includes only members of the Army, Navy, Marines, Air Force, Space Force and Coast Guard **and excludes** members of the **Ready Reserve of the U.S. Public Health Service** (Department of Health and Human Services) who are **Reserve Component** members under 28 U.S.C. § 101(24). To exclude these reservists who volunteer and place their lives on the line daily, does a huge diservice to them and their family members.

The Coalition seeks an **amendment to correct this diservice**, and offers the following language which has already been coordinated the Department and Governor Moore, and has received markup by the House Health and Government Operations Committee.

Where the bill reads:

- (line 5) "the National Guard and military reserves" replace with "**a reserve component**"

- (line 7) “National Guard and military reserves services” ... replace with “**reserve component**”. This language keeps in the spirit of the Governor’s “leave no man behind” and conforms to the DVMF-preferred use of the term “Uniformed Services”.
- Page 2 after (3) Eligible spouse add (4) **definition of reserve component**:

(4) "RESERVE COMPONENT" MEANS:

(i) THE ARMY NATIONAL GUARD OF THE UNITED STATES;

(ii) THE ARMY RESERVE;

(iii) THE NAVY RESERVE;

(iv) THE MARINE CORPS RESERVE;

(v) THE AIR NATIONAL GUARD OF THE UNITED STATES;

(vi) THE AIR FORCE RESERVE;

(vii) THE COAST GUARD RESERVE;

(viii) THE RESERVE CORPS OF THE U.S. PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE;

OR

(ix) ANY OTHER RESERVE SERVICE INCLUDED IN 28 U.S.C. § 101(24).

- Page 2 (lines 17-18) “Member of the National Guard or the military reserves” replace with “**reserve component**”
- Page 2 lines 25-26) “Member of the National Guard or the military reserves” replace with “**reserve component**”
- Page 2 (line 27) after armed forces add **uniformed services**.
- Page 3 (5) “Member of the National Guard or the military reserves” replace with “**reserve component**”

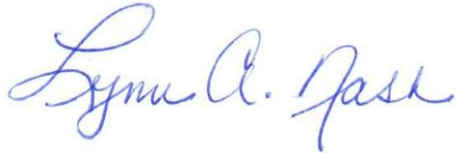
As previously stated, this bill has no fiscal consequence. Veterans and their spouses and dependents are currently not charged for burial. This legislation continues the practice of collecting a burial fee for National Guard and Reservists equal to the annual plot allowance established by the National Cemetery Administration. That fee currently is \$998.00.

We support the intent of SB 237 and ask for a **FAVORABLE report with AMENDMENT** to truly create the Burial Equity Act, by including **ALL reserve components**.

The Maryland Military Coalition is a registered non-profit, non-partisan advocacy organization comprised of 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.

We want to thank the Department of Veterans and Military Families and Governor Moore for their on-going support of **ALL** of the uniformed services community in Maryland.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Lynn A. Nash". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Lynn A. Nash
CAPT (R), U.S. Public Health Service
Communications Director

1 Attachment – Member Organizations of the Maryland Military Coalition



MARYLAND MILITARY COALITION

Serving Veterans through Legislative Advocacy

Member Organizations of the Maryland Military Coalition

Air Force Sergeants Association

American Military Society

American Minority Veterans Research Project

Association of the United States Navy

Commissioned Officers Association of the U.S. Public Health Service

Disabled American Veterans

Fleet Reserve Association of Annapolis

Jewish War Veterans of the U.S.A

Maryland Air National Guard Retirees' Association

Maryland Veterans Chamber of Commerce

Military Officers Association of America

Military Order of the Purple Heart

Military Order of the World Wars

Montford Point Marines of America

National Association of Black Veterans

National Association of Retired Federal Employees, Maryland Veterans

Naval Enlisted Reserve Association

NOAA Association of Commissioned Officers

Platoon 22

Reserve Organization of America

Society of Military Widows

Veterans of Foreign Wars

