

VeteransCaucusLegislationSupportLetter_SB309.pdf

Uploaded by: Benjamin Brooks

Position: FAV



MARYLAND GENERAL ASSEMBLY
VETERANS CAUCUS

February 12, 2025

Senator Brian Feldman, Chair
Education, Energy & the Environment Committee
2W Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: SB309, Department of Veterans and Military Families – Online Registry

Hearing Date: February 20, 2025

Dear Chairman Feldman,

Please let this letter serve as notice of the support of the Maryland General Assembly Senate Veterans Caucus for Senate Bill 309.

After review by our respective legislative committee, the Senate Veterans Caucus believes that the above-mentioned legislation would provide a valuable benefit to the veterans of the State of Maryland and requests a favorable report.

With kindest regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Benjamin T. Brooks".

Senator Benjamin Brooks
Senate Chair

cc: Senator Bryan Simonaire

Maryland Military Coalition SB309 Written Testimon

Uploaded by: David Lutzow

Position: FAV



MARYLAND MILITARY COALITION

Serving Veterans through Legislative Advocacy

February 20, 2025

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

Subject: Request for **FAVORABLE Report** – SB0309 – Department of Veterans and Military Families – Online Registry

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 by the Committee on SB0309 – Department of Veterans and Military Families – Online Registry, sponsored by Senator Bryan Simonaire.

The Maryland Department of Veterans and Military Families (DVMF) reports that Maryland is home to approximately 360,000 veterans and another 100,000 active-duty service members, Reservists, National Guard, and dependents. Currently, their options for contacting the DVMF are through email or by phone.

A critical aspect that's missing is the ability for individual(s) to self-identify. An online registry will provide much-needed information through the usage of pre-defined categories that can be queried to improve programs, resources, or services. Having a registry is an essential tool, and through its maturity, can help implement scalable support and outreach programs that will save time and resources.

The Maryland Military Coalition **strongly supports SB0309** and asks for a **FAVORABLE report**. An on-line registry will provide the DVMF, and the state of Maryland, with much needed historical data that can be leveraged to better augment current and future DVMF initiatives.

The Maryland Military Coalition is a registered non-profit, nonpartisan advocacy organization comprised of 22 prominent Maryland-based veteran and military groups. It represents 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 for supporting the uniformed services community.

Respectfully,

David Lutzow

David Lutzow

SMSgt, United States Air Force, Retired

Director, Maryland Military Coalition

Maryland Catholic Conference_FAV_SB309.pdf

Uploaded by: Diane Arias

Position: FAV



MARYLAND
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE

February 20, 2025

Senate Bill 309

**Department of Veterans and Military Families - Online Registry
Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee**

Position: Favorable

The Maryland Catholic Conference (MCC) is the public policy representative of the three (arch)dioceses serving Maryland, which together encompass over one million Marylanders. Statewide, their parishes, schools, hospitals, and numerous charities combine to form our state's second largest social service provider network, behind only our state government.

Senate Bill 309 requires the Communications, Outreach, and Advocacy Program in the Department of Veterans and Military Families to establish and maintain by December 31, 2025, an online registry to provide veterans, military families, and interested individuals with certain information; and requiring the Secretary of Veterans and Military Families to include certain information regarding the number of individuals on the registry, those added to registry, their status, and those unsubscribed from the registry in a certain annual report.

Military service members and their families deserve easy access to the benefits and services designed to support them. This legislation would establish a central registry providing information on available services, benefits, and updates relevant to veterans, active-duty service members, military families, and other eligible individuals. These services—including education, employment, healthcare, unemployment assistance, and recreational programs—are specifically tailored to meet the unique needs of those who serve. By creating this registry, we can enhance community outreach and strengthen the bonds within the military community. Service members share experiences and challenges that are often not widely understood outside the military. An online registry would serve as a valuable tool, fostering a sense of connection and ensuring that those who have served continue to receive the support they need.

The Maryland Department of Veterans and Military Families already provides Veterans Benefits Specialists to assist service members and their families in navigating federal, state, and local

benefits.¹ This registry would further streamline those efforts, ensuring that eligible individuals can efficiently access the resources they've earned. As Pope Francis has stated, *"If they carry out their duty honorably, they truly contribute to the common good of the nation and the maintenance of peace."*² Supporting this legislation reaffirms the dignity of our service members and honors their sacrifices in protecting our freedoms—including the freedom to practice our faith. By ensuring they have a dedicated space to access essential benefits, we uphold our commitment to those who have selflessly served our country.

For these reasons, the Maryland Catholic Conference asks for a favorable report on **SB 309**.

Thank you for your consideration.

¹ <https://myarmybenefits.us.army.mil/Benefit-Library/State/Territory-Benefits/Maryland#:~:text=Summary%20of%20Maryland%20Military%20and,are%20provided%20free%20of%20charge>.

² <https://www.usccb.org/news/2025/pope-vocation-military-and-police-defend-life-peace-justice>

sb0309.pdf

Uploaded by: Greg BURTON

Position: FAV

**Subject: Support for Senate Bill 309 - Department of Veterans and Military Families
Online Registry**

Dear Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee,

I am writing to express my strong support for Senate Bill 309, which seeks to establish an online registry within the Department of Veterans and Military Families. This bill is a significant step towards providing veterans, military families, and interested individuals with easy access to essential information and resources.

The proposed online registry will serve as a centralized platform where veterans and their families can find information about benefits, services, and programs available to them. This initiative will greatly enhance the accessibility and efficiency of the support provided to our veterans and military families, ensuring that they receive the assistance they deserve.

By requiring the Communications, Outreach, and Advocacy Program to establish and maintain this registry, Senate Bill 309 addresses the need for a streamlined and user-friendly system that can be easily accessed by those who need it most. The inclusion of this information in the annual report by the Secretary of Veterans and Military Families will also ensure transparency and accountability in the implementation of this initiative.

Furthermore, the online registry will foster greater awareness and understanding of the challenges faced by veterans and military families. It will encourage community engagement and support, as well as promote collaboration among various organizations and agencies dedicated to serving our veterans.

In conclusion, I urge you to support Senate Bill 309 and the establishment of the online registry within the Department of Veterans and Military Families. This bill represents a meaningful investment in the well-being of our veterans and their families, and I believe it will have a lasting positive impact on our community.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]

SB 309 Senator Simonaire_FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Kara Contino

Position: FAV

BRYAN W. SIMONAIRE
Legislative District 31
Anne Arundel County

Education, Energy, and the
Environment Committee

Joint Committee on the Chesapeake and
Atlantic Coastal Bays Critical Area



James Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street, Room 320
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-841-3658 · 301-858-3658
800-492-7122 Ext. 3658
Fax 410-841-3586 · 301-858-3586
Bryan.Simonaire@senate.state.md.us

The Senate of Maryland
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Written Testimony in SUPPORT of SB 309

Chairman and members of the Education, Energy, and Environment Committee, I am here to introduce and voice my support for Senate Bill 309 – *Department of Veterans and Military Families - Online Registry*.

SB 309 would require the Communications, Outreach, and Advocacy Program in the Department of Veterans and Military Families (DVMF) to establish and maintain by December 31, 2025, an online registry to provide veterans, military families, and interested individuals with certain information. It would also require the Secretary of DVMF to include certain information regarding the number of individuals on the registry, those added to registry, their status, and those unsubscribed from the registry in an annual report.

SB309_FAV_AARP.pdf

Uploaded by: Karen Kalla

Position: FAV



One Park Place | Suite 475 | Annapolis, MD 21401-3475
1-866-542-8163 | Fax: 410-837-0269
aarp.org/md | md@aarp.org | twitter: @aarpm
facebook.com/aarpm

**SB 309 Department of Veterans and Military Families - Online Registry
Education, Energy and the Environment Committee
February 20, 2025
FAVORABLE**

Good afternoon, Chair Feldman and members of the Education, Energy, and Environment Committee. I am Jim Campbell, a member of AARP Maryland, speaking in strong support of SB 309, which would require the Communications, Outreach, and Advocacy Program in the Department of Veterans and Military Families to establish and maintain an online registry for veterans, military families, and other interested individuals by December 31, 2025. We thank Senator Simonaire for introducing this important legislation.

AARP is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to advocating for healthcare, financial security, affordable utilities, and protections against financial abuse for Maryland's 850,000+ members, including many older veterans and military families.

SB 309 is essential because:

- It enhances access to critical resources by providing a centralized platform for veterans and military families to receive vital information on benefits, healthcare, financial assistance, and state services.
- It ensures transparency and accountability by requiring the Secretary of Veterans and Military Families to report annually on the registry's usage, new enrollees, and subscriptions.
- It particularly benefits older veterans, many of whom face challenges in accessing the services they have earned through their service.
- It provides military families with up-to-date information about available programs, financial assistance, healthcare options, and community support networks.

AARP Maryland recognizes the sacrifices made by veterans and their families. This online registry will bridge gaps in communication and ensure veterans—especially older veterans—are informed and supported.

For these reasons, AARP Maryland urges a Favorable report on SB 309. For questions or additional information, please contact Tammy Bresnahan, Senior Director of Advocacy, at tbresnahan@aarp.org or 410-302-8451.



COA written- SB 309 Online Registry Feb 20.pdf

Uploaded by: Lynn Nash

Position: FAV



Commissioned Officers Association of the United States Public Health Service

Protecting the interests of the USPHS Commissioned Corps since 1951

February 20, 2025

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

Re: Subject: **Request for FAVORABLE Report – SB 309 – Department of Veterans and Military Families – Online Registry**

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

On behalf of the Commissioned Officers Association, I write to recommend a **FAVORABLE report** by the Committee on **SB 309 – Department of Veterans and Military Families – Online Registry**. This bill would require that the Department establish and maintain an online registry to provide veterans, military families and interested individuals with information; and for the Department to write an annual report. An ongoing issue is having up-to-date statistics regarding those currently serving, those who have served and their families, caregivers and survivors living in Maryland. In addition, there is no rapid method of providing timely information to these same individuals when a need arises.

This bill creates an on-line registry, that while voluntary, would provide timely statistics. It provides the Department's Communications, Outreach and Advocacy Program with a timely way of disseminating information. Likewise, it provides members on the registry with a way of asking questions that would be directed to the correct entity within the Department.

Maryland is home to the headquarters of both the U.S. Public Health Service AND the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Commissioned Corps. In addition to my headquarters, U.S. Public Health Service officers serve in the Department of Health and Human Services operating administrations including the National Institutes of Health, the Food and Drug Administration, the Health Resources and Services Administration, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, as well as the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, among

Request for a FAVORABLE Report - **SB 309 – Department of Veterans and Military Families – Online Registry**

others. This includes the 1398 officers, 8 Ready Reservists and over 7,000 retirees living in Maryland.

The Commissioned Officers Association of the U.S. Public Health Service ***strongly supports SB 309 – Department of Veterans and Military Families – Online Registry*** asks the Committee for a **FAVORABLE report.**

The mission of the Commissioned Officers Association (COA) is to protect and enhance the public health and safety of the United States by supporting and advancing the interests of the Commissioned Corps and its officers through advocacy, education, training and dissemination of professional information.

We want to thank Senator Simonaire for his continued commitment to our veterans and 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, PhD, RN, PHCNS-BC, FAAN
CAPTAIN (Retired), United States Public Health Service
Commissioned Officers Association Director
Maryland Military Coalition
Lynn.Slepski@outlook.com

DVMF SB309 Letter of Information.pdf

Uploaded by: Morgan Murphy

Position: INFO



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

**WES MOORE
GOVERNOR**

**ARUNA MILLER
LT. GOVERNOR**

**ANTHONY C. WOODS
SECRETARY**

**Senate Bill 309- Department of Veterans and Military Families - Online Registry
Letter of Information**

February 17, 2025

The Honorable Brian J. Feldman
Chair, Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
2 West Miller 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.

The Department respectfully submits this letter of information for Senate Bill 309, which establishes an online registry to provide information to Veterans, service members, military families, and other interested individuals.

While the Department recognizes and appreciates the intent behind this legislation, to enhance communication and outreach to Maryland's military-connected community, there are operational and fiscal challenges presented by this bill. Below, I have outlined those challenges and appreciate Senator Simonaire for engaging with DVMF and DoIT to identify any necessary alterations.

Challenges Presented with Current Proposal

1. Undefined Costs & Procurement Hurdles

THE WINELAND BUILDING, FOURTH FLOOR
16 FRANCIS STREET, ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

TOLL FREE: 866-793-1577 • ANNAPOLIS: 410-260-3838 • FAX: 410-216-7928

veterans.maryland.gov
TTY USERS CALL VIA MD RELAY

- Although we have submitted a \$200,000 fiscal note, this is only a preliminary estimate. The actual cost cannot be fully defined until we develop specifications with the Department of Information Technology (DoIT).
- Given the complexity of the registry's required functionality, a custom system would likely need to be designed, requiring significant investment beyond our initial estimate.

2. **Timeline & Procurement Constraints**

- The bill requires the registry be operational by December 31, 2025. However, the procurement process alone—including approval from DoIT and the Department of General Services Office of State Procurement (DGS OSP)—is expected to take at least six months, significantly constraining the development timeline.
- The technical integration required to link the registry through the website, incorporate Granicus (our existing system), and ensure compliance with state security protocols adds additional delays beyond the stated deadline.

3. **Existing Communication Infrastructure**

- DVMF currently utilizes Granicus for digital outreach, which already provides insight into distribution list size, new subscribers, and opt-outs.
- The proposed registry would require us to collect additional personal data, including whether an individual is a Veteran, Active Duty, Reserve Component member, Maryland Defense Force member, spouse, dependent child, or other interested individual—and thus also require us to develop secure data storage methods.

Again, I appreciate the sponsor's collaboration and look forward to ongoing conversations to address these challenges.

Sincerely,



Anthony C. Woods
Secretary