

2025 SB0276 Testimony For 2025-02-05.pdf

Uploaded by: Alan Lang

Position: FAV

SB0276 – Favorable

Honorable Senators

I support:

- establishing rules of interpretation related to the uniformed services;
- altering the rule of interpretation for 'veteran'; and
- altering the application of certain provisions of law governing education to apply to all uniformed services, rather than only the armed forces.

Please enter a Favorable report for SB0276.

Alan Lang
45 Marys Mount Road
Harwood, Maryland 20776
410-336-9745
Alanlang1@verizon.net

Legislative District 30B

February 5, 2025

Simonaire2.pdf

Uploaded by: Joan Hunter

Position: FAV

January 30, 2025

Senator Bryan W. Simonaire
James Senate Office Building, Room 320
11 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Senator Simonaire,

This letter is to strongly urge the support and passage of MD SB276; Educational Equality for Service Members Act. This important proposed legislation will ensure the inclusion of all uniformed services as part of establishing rules of interpretation for "veteran" for Maryland residents.

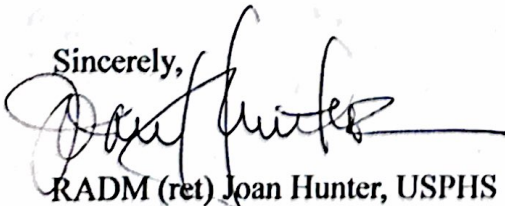
The United States Public Health Service (USPHS) Commissioned Corps was established in 1889 as a cadre of uniformed service members dedicated to serving sick and injured seamen as part of the Marine Hospital Service. Today it is a cadre of approximately 6000 trained, non-armed health professionals within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services with a mission: "...to protect, promote and advance the health and safety of our Nation." Currently the USPHS includes physicians, nurses, dentists, veterinarians, scientists and engineers who respond to the health needs of our citizens in national emergencies, they conduct medical and behavioral health research, they protect our citizens against unsafe products and provide direct healthcare to underserved communities.

As a retired Rear Admiral in the USPHS, I know the value our officers provide to our nation's citizens. Similar to other uniformed Services, USPHS officers: take the same oath of office as our Armed Service members, earn the same military rank (U.S. Navy) and pay rates, earn the same retirement pay and benefits, are covered by the GI Bill, are eligible for TRICARE military health care system and earn the same benefits and care offered by the Veterans Administration to other Service members.

In addition, the USPHS officers are ready to deploy to national emergencies, pandemics, and national disasters in order to provide clinical care, expertise and management to affected citizens. We have the same ethical standards and professional conduct as our "sister services", and are required to successfully train and maintain proficiency and readiness for deployment.

It is without hesitation I support and thank you for your effort to recognize the need for equality among all eight of our Nation's Uniformed Services.

Sincerely,



RADM (ret) Joan Hunter, USPHS
3678 Bay Drive
Edgewater, MD 21037

SB 276 Hugh McClean_UMB School of Law_Letter of Su

Uploaded by: Kara Contino

Position: FAV



School of Law
The Bob Parsons Veterans
Advocacy Clinic

1420 N. Charles St.
Baltimore, MD 21201-5779

T: 410.837.5706
F: 410.837.4776
law.ubalt.edu

January 23, 2025

Education, Energy and Environment Committee
Miller Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD

Re: Letter in Support of Senate Bill 276

Dear Honorable Committee Members,

I respectfully submit this letter in support of Senate Bill (“SB”) 276, the Educational Equality for Service Members Act. I am an Associate Professor and Director of the Bob Parsons Veterans Advocacy Clinic at the University of Baltimore School of Law. I founded the clinic in 2014, and I have supervised student-attorneys in the representation of veterans in a wide variety of litigation and legislative initiatives for the last ten years. Prior to joining the faculty, I served in the U.S. Air Force Judge Advocate General Corps from 2003 to 2014, and was on the faculty at the U.S. Air Force Academy, Colorado Springs, Colorado.

I fully support the interpretations and definitions outlined in SB 276. The bill clearly defines military terms that are important in the designation of certain benefits. The bill removes previous ambiguity in military terminology. Where appropriate, the bill incorporates definitions from the U.S. Code, thereby maintaining continuity between military terminology in state and federal law.

For the above reasons, I fully endorse SB 276. Please do not hesitate to contact me with questions at hmclean@ubalt.edu.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Hugh McClean'.

Hugh McClean

SB 276 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

SB 276 - " Educational Equality for Servicemembers Act "

I am Senator Bryan Simonaire presenting SB 276.

I am very excited to be presenting a package of bills that represents the most comprehensive overhaul of military law in our state's modern history.

The package consists of 8 bills:

At the core is SB 275 - Modernization of Military Laws Act

Along with 7 other bills covering all of Maryland Laws

I have worked directly with the Uniformed Services, military advocates, federal and state agencies, military legal experts and our DLS legal counsel to draft a consensus and workable solution.

This being the first bill hearing of the package I wanted to give you an overview of what the package does:

1. **Completely restructures** Maryland's military law into the 21st century with modernized and standardized terms that are also strategically centralized in one location
2. **Establishes consistent and equal benefits** among all 8 Uniformed Services branches and reserve units, and
3. **Authorizes the Department of Veterans and Military Families** to provide support to our service members, in addition to our veterans.

The advantages are namely:

1. Updates current laws to **provide over 100 additional benefits** that were being denied to various former and current service members simply because of inconsistent and outdated terminology.
2. **Creates a centralized structure** that facilitates easy, consistent and standard military laws for future revisions.
3. **Codifies the Department's authority and duty** to support the service members.

To get an **idea of the magnitude** of this package, every legislator received a memo this past November from the Department of Veterans and Military Families highlighting 34 sections in our laws with inconsistencies in military terminology.

In contrast, this comprehensive legislative package updates more than 230 sections with over 500 revisions touching nearly every article.

But first a brief refresher on terms so my presentation makes sense:

The term '**Uniformed Services**' is comprised of 8 federal branches.

There are **6 military** branches of the Uniformed Services (~ 1.3 million active duty):

Referred to as the '**Armed forces**':

Air Force, Army, Coast Guard, Marines, Navy and Space Force

There are **2 non-military** branches of the Uniformed Services (~6,000 active duty nationwide)

- Commissioned Corps Officers of the Public Health Services (PHS)
- Commissioned Corps Officers of the National Oceanic Atmospheric and Administration (NOAA)

I am sure we are all familiar with what our military branches do, but some may not realize what the other non-military branches do to protect our nation.

I won't discuss all PHS and NOAA responsibilities, but I will highlight a few tasks.

PHS sent hundreds of officers over to Afghanistan to assist during the war. Additionally, they were sent over to Africa to help when there was an Ebola outbreak to contain it.

NOAA is involved in almost every mission performed by our military through its coordination of their satellites and weather capabilities. Additionally, you may not know that NOAA was in the Gulf helping sweep for mines during the war.

And that brings me to SB 276, which deals with the Education Article by updating the uniformed services term to be inclusive of all 8 branches in areas. The update of terminology is broken down into 4 main categories:

- **Definitions**
- **State and Local Boards** (Enrollment, teacher certification of uniformed service members, purple star schools)
- **Higher Education Institutions** (Guidelines, policies, registration of uniformed servicemembers)
- **Higher Education Commission** (Service obligations, scholarships of uniformed servicemembers)

For example, under this legislation, all uniformed service members that are deployed on active duty into our state are now given the same considerations as other branches when enrolling their children into our schools.

Another example is Maryland will now make all uniformed service members eligible for the deferment of a state service obligation if they are called to active duty outside our state, just like we give to the other 6 branches of the uniformed services.

I will give you one last example, for the K-12 Purple Star school program that highlights schools that work with service members and their children. This legislation updates the definitions to include all 8

uniformed service branches just as they were adopted in Comar when the Department actually implemented the program.

Lastly, I would note that in general, these bills are **not changing the underlying policy but providing equality among our service members**. And worked very hard to keep the **fiscal note to zero** or within all the Department's current budget.

I could go into much greater depth but will stop there and say, "For all these reasons, I ask for your favorable consideration."

Maryland Military Coalition SB0276 Written Testimo

Uploaded by: DAVID Dragics

Position: FWA



MARYLAND MILITARY COALITION

Serving Veterans through Legislative Advocacy

February 3, 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 with Amendments** – SB0276 – Educational Equality for Service Members 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 Amendments** by the Committee on **SB0276 – Educational Equality for Service Members Act**, sponsored by Senator Bryan Simonaire. The bill will update and change the application of certain provisions of law governing education to apply to all uniformed services rather than only the armed forces. It is a **positive step in making the Maryland Code consistent with U.S. Code in the use of terms related to the uniform services**, which the MMC endorses. However, our recommendation of a FAVORABLE report with Amendments 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, in which § 101 (2) 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.” That subparagraph, **38 U.S. Code § 101 (2), by itself, does not include the commissioned corps of both the Public Health Service (PHS) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and could be interpreted differently from the existing definition in Maryland’s General Provisions § 1-117, which does.** The MMC believes this could lead to an interpretation that veterans who served honorably with PHS and NOAA are not eligible.

Subject: Request FAVORABLE Report with Amendment – SB0276 – Educational Equality for Service Members Act

The MMC's position is to make certain that those who have served in the PHS and NOAA continue to have the same rights and benefits as those who have served in the armed forces and received a DD Form 214 that is other than dishonorable. Our position is also to make certain that all federal and state legal references supporting the above clearly indicate the same to those who will use these references in the future. **We respectfully request that the language be amended to read that "veteran" has the meaning stated in § 1-117 of the General Provisions Article.**

The specific instances where these amendments should be made are as follows:

- Page 16, lines 12-17: restore the deleted text in § 1-117 and delete the reference to 38 U.S. Code § 101.
- Page 17, lines 13-16: amend the language to read that "veteran" has the meaning stated in § 1-117 of the General Provisions Article.

The Maryland Military Coalition **strongly supports SB0276** and asks for a **FAVORABLE report with Amendments** as noted above. Updating and implementing the proposed changes will make the Maryland Code consistent with the U.S. Code for key terms related to the uniformed services and will decrease their misuse in future legislation and policymaking.

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 in Maryland.

Respectfully,



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



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

National Active and Retired Federal Employees, Maryland Veterans

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 Active and 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