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**HB248 Motor Vehicle Registration – Fee Exemption- Unemployed Disabled Veterans
FAVORABLE
Environment and Transportation Committee
January 30, 2025**

Good afternoon, Chair Korman and Members of the Environment and Transportation Committee. I am Karen Kalla, AARP Maryland volunteer legislative aide and resident of Montgomery County. AARP Maryland represents more than 850,000 members statewide and is the largest nonprofit, nonpartisan organization advocating for Marylanders aged 50 and older, as well as their families. AARP has four areas of focus serving members of the military: caregiving, fighting fraud, helping with career and employment opportunities through the Veterans and Military Spouse Job Center, and access to benefits. AARP Maryland supports HB248 Motor Vehicle Registration – Fee Exemption – Unemployed Disabled Veterans. We thank Delegate Griffith for sponsoring this bill.

What HB248 Does

- Exempts from Maryland vehicle registration fees, one vehicle owned by, or leased to and personally used by a veteran who is unemployable due to a service-connected disability.
- Exempts from Maryland vehicle registration fees, one vehicle owned and personally used by an individual who is the surviving spouse of a deceased disabled veteran.
- HB248 will take effect October 1, 2025.

Why This Matters

Veterans serve our country and people, putting their lives and livelihoods in jeopardy to protect and preserve our democracy and quality of life. As they transition to civilian life, many will be unable to work due to injuries sustained in the line of duty. In 2023, Maryland had approximately 348,459 veterans living in the state. Of those, 83,978 or 23.8% had a service-connected disability.

It is incumbent upon our local, state, and national governments to make sure that we acknowledge the sacrifices of our veterans by providing them with benefits lost because of their service to our country. In this case, the lost benefit is that of certain abilities and employment to support themselves and their families.

- An exemption for vehicle registration fees might be the difference in a disabled unemployed veteran affording to own their own vehicle and means of transportation, taking some burden off publicly subsidized or other forms of transportation.

- Knowing they will be adequately supported upon return to civilian life, provides greater incentive for individuals to enlist in military services.

Broader Context – Service-Connected Disability Status

The Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs 2022 Report states:

- According to the US Census, compared to civilian counterparts, veterans today are more likely to suffer from trauma-related injuries, substance abuse, and mental health disorders.
- Compared to veterans of other service eras, Post 9/11 veterans have a significantly higher chance (43%) of having a service-connected disability and to have a rating of 70% or higher (39%).
- Among all veterans, men are no more likely to have a disability than women, but women are more likely to have a rating of 70% or higher.
- According to the VA, in December 2022 Post 9/11 veteran claims made up 24% of the total inventory, Gulf War made up 36%, and combined Vietnam, peacetime, and other eras made up 44%.

While the costs of HB248 might seem problematic in the short run, the benefits gained from those who have militarily served our country are incalculable. AARP believes we must honor the service and acknowledge the sacrifice of our veterans. HB248 does so, by providing greater economic viability for disabled, unemployable veterans and their dependents.

For these reasons, AARP Maryland respectfully requests a favorable report for HB248. For questions or more information, please contact Tammy Bresnahan, Senior Director of Advocacy at tbresnahan@aarp.org or by calling 410-302-8451.