Maryland Military Coalition SB0067 Written Testimo Uploaded by: DAVID Dragics

Position: FAV



MARYLAND MILITARY COALITION

Serving Veterans through Legislative Advocacy

January 24, 2025

The Honorable Pamela Beidle Chair, Finance Committee 3 East Miller Senate Office Building Annapolis, MD 21401

Subject: Request for **FAVORABLE Report** – SB0067 – Health Occupations Board – Notation of Veteran Status and Eligibility for Benefits

Dear Chair Beidle and distinguished members of the Finance Committee:

On behalf of the members of the Maryland Military Coalition (MMC), I write to recommend a FAVORABLE report by the Committee on SB0067 – Health Occupations Board – Notation of Veteran Status and Eligibility for Benefits, sponsored by Senator Bryan Simonaire. This bill encourages each health occupation board to establish a process to include a notation of veteran status on a license, certificate, or registration to assist in determining the eligibility of a veteran for State and federal veteran benefits. If the veteran agrees to have that notation applied, that individual also agrees to be contacted by appropriate Executive Branch agencies regarding their eligibility for State or federal veteran benefits.

The MMC supports the intent and processes of this bill. It recognizes veteran status and reduces the burden on individuals to prove their eligibility for State or federal veteran benefits, saving them personal time and effort to do so. We applaud this step in making it easier for those who have served other than dishonorably.

The Maryland Military Coalition **strongly supports SB0067** and asks for a **FAVORABLE** report from the Finance Committee.

The Maryland Military Coalition is a registered non-profit, non-partisan 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 supporting the uniformed services community in Maryland.

Respectfully,

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

Mend l'Aragies



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

Support for Maryland SB 67 - 22 Jan 2025.pdfUploaded by: David Heredia

Position: FAV



January 24, 2025

David Heredia, Jr.
Commander, Department of Maryland
The American Legion
101 N. Gay Street, Suite E
Baltimore, MD, 21202

The Honorable Bryan W. Simonaire Maryland State Senate 11 Bladen Street Annapolis, MD 21401

The Honorable Michael A. Jackson Maryland State Senate 11 Bladen Street Annapolis, MD 21401

cc: Finance Committee Members

Subject: Support for Maryland SB 67 – Notation of Veteran Status on Health Occupations Licenses

Dear Senators Simonaire and Jackson,

On behalf of The American Legion Department of Maryland and our over 42,000 members who proudly serve the nearly 350,000 veterans and their families across Maryland, I write to express our strong support for Senate Bill 67 (SB 67). This legislation authorizes health occupations boards to include a notation indicating veteran status on professional licenses, certificates, or registrations and facilitates connecting veterans to the benefits and resources they have earned.

This legislation represents a meaningful step in honoring the sacrifices of our service members while addressing practical challenges they face. Recognizing veteran status on professional licenses serves multiple purposes:

- 1. **Facilitating Access to Benefits**: Veterans often face barriers to accessing the full range of resources available to them. By including a veteran designation on professional credentials, relevant agencies and organizations can more effectively identify and connect veterans to the programs they deserve.
- 2. **Honoring Service**: Acknowledging veteran status on licenses publicly recognizes the contributions and sacrifices of those who served, promoting a culture of respect and appreciation in the professional community.
- 3. **Supporting Targeted Services**: By identifying veterans within licensed professions, Maryland can develop better-targeted policies and support initiatives tailored to their unique needs, enhancing overall service delivery.

At The American Legion, along with other veteran service organizations (VSOs) such as the DAV and VFW, we work tirelessly to assist veterans at no cost. Our accredited Veteran Service Officers (VSOs) help veterans navigate the benefits system, ensuring they receive the care and support they earned. SB 67 will further these efforts by streamlining the identification process and fostering greater awareness of available benefits.

We commend your leadership in sponsoring this legislation and urge the Finance Committee to support SB 67. This bill is a critical tool for honoring Maryland's veterans and addressing their needs both practically and symbolically. Veterans have already given so much to our nation—it is our duty to ensure they are supported in their civilian lives.

Thank you for your continued advocacy for Maryland's veterans. Together, we can make meaningful strides in recognizing and supporting those who have served.

Sincerely,

David Heredia, Jr.

Commander, Department of Maryland

The American Legion

David Heredia Jr.

cc: Finance Committee Members

SB 67_AFSCME3_FAV.pdfUploaded by: Denise Gilmore

Position: FAV



SB 67 – Health Occupations Boards – Notation of Veteran Status and Eligibility for Benefits

Finance Committee January 28, 2025

Position: FAVORABLE

AFSCME Council 3 represents 45,000 state, county, and municipal employees, including health care professionals who have proudly served our nation in the armed services. Each year, these professionals go through certification and licensure with the health occupations boards. Senate Bill 67 enhances collaboration between the health occupations boards and the Department of Veterans and Military Families to ensure these veterans receive the benefits they have earned and deserve.

We urge the committee to provide a favorable report on SB 67. Thank you.

The following states that have collective bargaining for state employees, AK, CA, CT, DC, DE, HI, IL, ME, MN, NE, NJ, NM, NV, OH, OR, PA, MT, RI, WA have a terminal point for negotiations, either binding interest arbitration, the right to strike, or a legislative process. These processes create a level playing field for both parties.

This legislation would create a mutual incentive to compel parties to reach an agreement around collective bargaining negotiations by instilling a binding interest arbitration process, whereby if the two sides cannot come to agreement through negotiations by a specified deadline the proposals.

From the two sides would be presented to a professional, neutral third- party arbitrator – hearing from witnesses and experts, with data and evidence – for consideration of all the facts involved with the purpose of determining which proposal is most appropriate to implement. The choice by the arbitrator would then be considered a binding resolution to be implemented by the Governor and exclusive bargaining representative for whatever appropriations are necessary to implement and fund the memorandum of understanding. The budgetary powers of the Maryland General Assembly remain unaltered.

SB 188 is a strong and positive step toward enhancing fairness, balance, and efficiency, and resolution. It follows a model that is well-established in other states and among Maryland counties. We urge a favorable report.



SB67_AARP_FAV.pdf Uploaded by: James Campbell 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: @aarpmd facebook.com/aarpmd

SB67 Health Occupations Boards – Notation of Veteran Status and Eligibility for Benefits Senate Finance Committee Favorable January 28, 2025

Good afternoon, Chair Beidle, and members of the Senate Finance Committee. My name is Jim Campbell, President Emeritus for AARP Maryland, former Maryland State Delegate, and chair of AARP Maryland's Veterans' committee. AARP has four area of focus serving members of the military: caregiving, fighting fraud, helping with career and employment opportunities though the Veterans and Military Spouse Job Center, and access to benefits. AARP Maryland and its 850,000 members support SB67 and thank Senators Simonaire and Jackson for sponsoring this legislation.

What SB67 Does

- SB67 authorizes the health occupations boards to create a process for including a notation indicating veteran status on a license, certificate, or registration upon application and consent of a veteran.
- Notation and consent of the notation provide a mechanism for appropriate Executive Branch Agencies to contact a Veteran with information regarding eligibility for State and Federal Veterans' benefits.
- Included in this process is the consent for information of Veterans status to be communicated with appropriate Executive Branch Agencies for the purpose of sharing information and outreach regarding Veterans' benefits.
- SB67 would provide a valuable path for connecting veterans with benefits—benefits which they have earned through dedicated service to our country—that enhance their quality of life and that of their families and communities.

Why This Matters

Veterans serve our country by 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.

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%).
- 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%.

Goals of the Maryland Department of Veterans and Military Families include;

- Increase outreach to women and other marginalized veteran populations to ensure they are aware of VA benefits, healthcare, and mental health services.
- Increase outreach to caregivers, spouses, and adult children of veterans to ensure they are aware of the VA Caregiver Support Program, Charlotte Hall Veterans Home, VA benefits, and other wellness resources.
- Diversify outreach to communities serving veterans to educate on VA benefits and healthcare and increase capacity to serve more veterans filing VA claims in response to the PACT Act.
- Strategically provide outreach to state agencies and local municipalities, especially in rural areas, encourage government and community organizations to screen for military service and to refer to MDVA and VA for benefits information.

In recognizing the sacrifices of veterans made for our country, AARP believes we must ensure that our veterans have the most efficient access to the benefits they are entitled to receive. SB67 will help achieve that goal and we urge a favorable report. Please feel free to contact Tammy Bresnahan, Senior Director of Advocacy at tbresnahan@aarp.org or by calling 410-302-8451.

SB 67 Senator Simonaire_FAV.pdfUploaded 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



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The Senate of Maryland
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

SB 67 - Dept of Health Licensure Veteran Designation

I am Senator Bryan Simonaire presenting SB 67.

I worked with the Department of Health and the military community on this consensus legislation. It basically allows a veteran to put a 'Veteran notation' on their professional health license.

First, let me say this is enabling legislation for all its departmental licensing boards, and setups the framework if the Department implements it on one or more of its boards.

I have worked with the Department and flexibility is key to success and this bill provides that flexibility.

This bill does two main things:

- 1) Enables one or more of the Department's licensing boards to issue a professional license or certificate with the "Veteran" notation placed on it, and
- 2) If enabled, it establishes an outreach to the veteran if they want the Veteran notation and the applicant consents to being contacted by appropriate Executive Branch agencies regarding the applicant's eligibility for State or federal veterans' benefits.

This may sound familiar as this is what is done for the MVA driver licenses. Driver license applicants can have a veteran's notation placed on their driver license and be contacted by the Department of Veterans and Military Families regarding available veteran benefits.

The only difference is that this legislation is enabling.

The advantage to this approach is the Department knows which boards this would work on best and could even pilot it on a few before rolling it out on more or all their boards.

While the MVA program has been hugely popular, Maryland has a long way to go to reach our veterans as less than 50% of our veteran population is taking advantage the MVA program.

That's why it is imperative we use as many methods as possible to reach out to our veterans. This legislation provides one more tool to reach out to veterans while also providing additional benefits to the veteran community.

Additionally, in Maryland, we are looking to do everything we can to help reduce veteran suicide. One of the key factors is avoiding isolation.

This legislation provides multiple benefits, including reducing isolation:

- 1. This will help with networking and reducing isolation as more people including other veterans will see these licensees are veterans and hopefully reach out more to them.
 - a. One of the many factors of veterans' suicide is isolation especially as it pertains to a veterans' own service and experiences. This will allow for public awareness of veterans

through thanking them for their service, other veterans seeing it and talking with them and re-enforcing they are not alone.

- 2. It provides another tool to reach out to our veteran population with their consent through using their contact information to share eligible benefits with them,
- 3. It is another avenue for the public to show appreciation for their service, and
- 4. Lastly, it also provides potential financial benefits to our veteran as many customers are more likely to hire a veteran, repeat as a customer or just give a bigger tip for their service, where applicable.

If you think about it, you can't beat this is a low-cost investment with all its potential benefits.

For all these reasons, I ask for your favorable consideration.

SB67_VeteransCaucus_FAVUploaded by: Veterans Caucus

Position: FAV



MARYLAND GENERAL ASSEMBLY VETERANS CAUCUS

January 27, 2025

Senator Pamela Beidle, Chair Finance 3E Miller Senate Office Building Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: SB67, Health Occupations Boards – Notation of Veteran Status and Eligibility for

Benefits

Hearing Date: January 28, 2025

Dear Chairwoman, Beidle,

Please let this letter serve as notice of the support of the Maryland General Assembly Senate Veterans Caucus for Senate Bill 67.

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,

Senator Benjamin Brooks

Senate Chair

cc: Senator Bryan Simonaire

SB 67 - BOP - FIN - LOSWA.pdf Uploaded by: Meghan Lynch

Position: FWA



Board of Physicians

Wes Moore, Governor · Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor · Harbhajan Ajrawat, M.D., Chair

2025 SESSION POSITION PAPER

BILL NO.: SB 67

TITLE: Health Occupations Boards - Notation of Veteran Status and Eligibility

for Benefits

COMMITTEE: Finance

POSITION: Letter of Support with Amendments

TITLE: Health Occupations Boards - Notation of Veteran Status and Eligibility for Benefits

POSITION AND RATIONALE:

The Maryland Board of Physicians (the Board) is submitting this Letter of Support with Amendments for Senate Bill 67 (SB 67) – Health Occupations Boards – Notation of Veteran Status and Eligibility for Benefits. SB 67 would authorize health occupation boards to create a process for including a notation of veteran status on a license, certificate, or registration. The bill would also require health occupation boards to electronically share relevant applicant information with the appropriate executive branch agencies to help determine eligibility for state or federal veterans' benefits.

The Board is fully committed to supporting the veteran community in any way that is within the Board's mission. The Board believes SB 67 offers a valuable tool for the recognition of veterans who hold a health occupation license. The Board can identify "veteran status" on a Practitioner's Public Profile, which is also the source of any verification of licensure. However, the Board does not currently have the resources to serve as a primary source verifier of an applicant's eligibility for veteran benefits. In addition, other agencies currently do not accept a license issued by the Board as a primary source verification of an applicant's military service or eligibility for veterans' benefits.

The Board respectfully proposes that SB 67 be amended by striking lines 6 through 12 and 13 through 23 on page 2 of the bill, as certifying an applicant's eligibility for veterans benefits is not operationally feasible or consistent with the role of the board. Striking this language would also ensure that the responsibility for verifying an applicant's eligibility for veteran benefits falls to agencies better equipped to handle such determinations for all military members, not just those in a health occupation profession. The Board remains supportive of the bill's goal. The Board stands ready to collaborate with its sponsors and proponents to further improve the licensure process for service members, veterans, and military spouses. For these reasons, the Physicians Board respectfully urges a favorable report on SB 67 with the amendments below.

AMENDMENT TO SENATE BILL 67

- On page 1, in line 19, strike "or registration" and substitute "<u>registration</u>, or <u>Public Profile</u>."
- On page 2, in lines 6 through 12, strike:
 - "(2) INDICATE THAT THE APPLICANT CONSENTS TO:
 - (I) HAVING A NOTATION ON THE APPLICANT'S LICENSE, CERTIFICATE, OR REGISTRATION INDICATING THAT THE APPLICANT IS A VETERAN; AND
 - (II) BEING CONTACTED BY APPROPRIATE EXECUTIVE BRANCH AGENCIES REGARDING THE APPLICANT'S ELIGIBILITY FOR STATE AND FEDERAL VETERANS BENEFITS."

and substitute:

- "(2) INDICATE THAT THE APPLICANT CONSENTS TO HAVING A NOTATION ON THE APPLICANT'S LICENSE, CERTIFICATE, REGISTRATION, OR PUBLIC PROFILE INDICATING THAT THE APPLICANT IS A VETERAN."
- On page 2, in lines 13 through 23, strike:
 - "(C) IF AN APPLICANT PRESENTS THE REQUIRED DOCUMENTATION AND CONSENTS IN ACCORDANCE WITH SUBSECTION (B) OF THIS SECTION, A HEALTH OCCUPATION BOARD SHALL:
 - (1) INCLUDE ON THE APPLICANT'S LICENSE, CERTIFICATION, OR REGISTRATION A NOTATION INDICATING THAT THE APPLICANT IS A VETERAN; AND
 - (2) IN ACCORDANCE WITH §§ 4-305 THROUGH 4-325 OF THE GENERAL PROVISIONS ARTICLE AND ANY OTHER APPLICABLE LAW, AND ON REQUEST FROM AN EXECUTIVE BRANCH AGENCY, ELECTRONICALLY TRANSMIT TO THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH AGENCY APPROPRIATE INFORMATION ABOUT THE APPLICANT RELEVANT TO DETERMINING THE APPLICANT'S ELIGIBILITY FOR STATE OR FEDERAL VETERANS BENEFITS."

and substitute:

"(C) IF AN APPLICANT PRESENTS THE REQUIRED DOCUMENTATION AND CONSENTS IN ACCORDANCE WITH SUBSECTION (B) OF THIS SECTION, A HEALTH OCCUPATION BOARD SHALL INCLUDE ON THE APPLICANT'S LICENSE, CERTIFICATION, REGISTRATION OR PUBLIC PROFILE A NOTATION INDICATING THAT THE APPLICANT IS A VETERAN."

Thank you for your consideration. For more information, please contact:

Michael Tran Health Policy Analyst Maryland Board of Physicians (410) 764-3786

Sincerely,

Harbhajan Ajrawat, M.D.

Chair, Maryland Board of Physicians

The opinion of the Boards expressed in this document does not necessarily reflect that of the Maryland Department of Health or the Administration.

SB 67 - BoPharm - LOI.pdfUploaded by: Maryland Department of Health /Office of Governmen oga

Position: INFO



Wes Moore, Governor · Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor · Laura Herrera Scott, M.D., M.P.H., Secretary

January 22, 2024

The Honorable Pamela Beidle Chair, Finance Committee 3E Miller Senate Office Building Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: SB 0067 – Health Occupations Boards – Notation of Veteran Status and Eligibility for Benefits

Dear Chair Beidle and Committee Members:

The Maryland Board of Pharmacy (the "Board") respectfully submits this letter of information for Senate Bill ("SB") 0067 titled "Health Occupations Boards – Notation of Veteran Status and Eligibility for Benefits)."

The Board is supportive of efforts to improve the lives of veterans and their families. However, the Board advises that implementation of the proposed legislation would result in costs associated with changes to its licensing software, and may delay the processing of applications submitted by veterans in order to obtain the necessary documentation and consent. Furthermore, in the event that the Board is contacted by any veterans benefit agency for information necessary to provide benefits as set forth in the bill, the Board would currently be able to provide such information without this legislation.

Thank you for your time and consideration. For more information, please contact Julie Gaskins, Legislative Liaison, at 410-764-4709 or julie.gaskins2@maryland.gov, or Deena Speights-Napata, MA, Executive Director, at 410-764-4753 or deena.speights-napata@maryland.gov.

Sincerely,

Deena Speights-Napata, M.A.

Executive Director

SB 67 - MBON - FIN - LOI.pdf Uploaded by: Maryland State of Position: INFO



Board of Nursing

Wes Moore, Governor · Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor · Laura Herrera Scott, M.D., M.P.H., Secretary

January 28th, 2025

The Honorable Pamela Beidle Chair, Finance Committee Room 3 Senate Office Building Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: SB 0067 – Health Occupations Boards - Notation of Veteran Status and Eligibility for Benefits

Dear Chair Beidle and Committee Members:

The Maryland Board of Nursing (the Board) respectfully submits this letter of information for SB0067 Health Occupations Boards - Notation of Veteran Status and Eligibility for Benefits.

While the Board is supportive of the legislature's efforts to improve the lives of veterans in our state, and believes that nurses who have served in our armed forces should be recognized for their service, it is currently out of the scope of the Board to serve as a primary source for verification of veteran benefit eligibility. As the bill is currently written, the Board would be required to create a system to verify veteran status and communicate said status with other executive agencies. At this time, the Board has neither the expertise nor the capacity for such a function, and should the bill pass, would need to hire on additional staff and take on additional IT costs to comply. That said, the Board is supportive of the goals of this bill, and would be happy to work with legislators to improve the licensure process for nurse veterans.

Thank you again for your time. For more information, please contact Ms. Mitzi Fishman, Director of Legislative Affairs, at 410-585-2049 or mitzi.fishman@maryland.gov, or Ms. Rhonda Scott, Executive Director, at 410-585-1953 or rhonda.scott2@maryland.gov.

Sincerely,

Christine Lechliter Board President

Clustrie Gellete

The opinion of the Board expressed in this document does not necessarily reflect that of the Department of Health or the Administration.

SB 67 - Acupuncture Bd - FIN - LOI.pdf Uploaded by: State of Maryland Position: INFO



Wes Moore, Governor · Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor · Laura Herrera Scott, M.D., M.P.H., Secretary

Board of Acupuncture Metro Executive Plaza 4201 Patterson Avenue, Third Floor Baltimore, Maryland 21215

January 28, 2025

The Honorable Pamela Beidle Chair, Finance Committee 3 East Senate Miller Office Building 11 Bladen Street Annapolis, MD 21401-1991

RE: SB 67 - Health Occupations Boards – Notation of Veteran Status and Eligibility for Benefits - Letter of Information

Dear Chair Beidle:

The Maryland Board of Acupuncture (the "Board") is submitting this letter of Information for **SB 67- Notation of Veteran Status and Eligibility for Benefits**. The Board appreciates the continued efforts of the General Assembly to both expand and innovate the existing ways in which the State can recognize and support Maryland residents that are currently serving in and are veterans of the military.

While SB 67 makes clear that health occupations boards "..may establish a process to include a notation indicating veteran status on a license..." and "...may adopt regulations to carry out the provisions...", the bill also presents requirements that will present an administrative burden that may hinder support in the form of implementation. More specifically, under Health Occupations Article, § 1-707:

- Page 1, lines 19-20, subsection (A) "...and to assist in determining eligibility for State and Federal veterans benefits in accordance with this section"; and
- Page 2, lines 19-23, subsection (C) (2) "...and on request from an executive branch agency, electronically transmit to the executive branch agency appropriate information about the application relevant to determining the applicant's eligibility for State or Federal veterans benefits."

The Board is not the appropriate entity to determine individual eligibility for State or Federal veteran benefits. It is not within the Board's area of expertise nor does the Board have the capacity to make an eligibility determination for services for active military, and veteran applicants and licensees.

I hope this information is useful and helps to further the discussion on how State government services can be maximized to support those who made the ultimate commitment to us. If you would like to discuss this further, please contact Tiffany L. Smith Williams, Executive Director for the Board of Acupuncture at (410)764-5925 or at tiffany.smith-williams@maryland.gov.

Sincerely,

Tiffany L. Smith-Williams, MHS CPM

Definite Williams

Executive Director Board of Acupuncture

The opinion of the Board expressed in this letter of information does not necessarily reflect that of the Department of Health or the Administration.