

Simonaire3.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 SB279; Employment and Insurance 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.

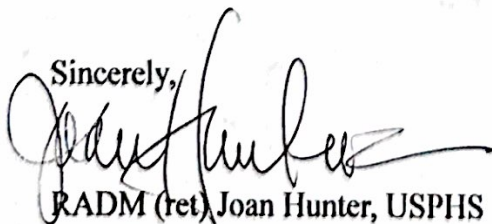
The United States Public Health Service (USPHS) Commissioned Corps was established in 1889 as a cadre of uniformed service members dedicated to serving sick and injured seamen as part of the Marine Hospital Service. Today it is a cadre of approximately 6000 trained, non-armed health professionals within 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

Testimony - SB0279 Employment and Insurance Equali

Uploaded by: Joseph Fay

Position: FAV



JOINT VETERANS COMMITTEE OF MARYLAND, Inc.

TESTIMONY

HB0895/SB0279 Employment and Insurance Equality for Service Members Act

January 10, 2025

House Hearing: February 12, 2025, 1:00pm

Senate Hearing: February 5, 2025, 2:00pm

The Maryland Joint Veterans Committee (JVC) **SUPPORTS** HB0895/SB0279 Employment and Insurance Equality for Service Members Act for the following reasons:

- This bill updates and standardizes terms across the law.
- The bill adds all Uniformed Service Members, not just the Armed Forces.
- Adds Eligible Spouses
- Changes to Reserve Component from National Guard.
- Recognizes Uniformed Services Training and Education.
- Allows for temporary licensing for Active Service Members, Eligible Veterans, and Eligible Spouses when moving from out of state.

The JVC encourages a **FAVORABLE** vote.

The Joint Veterans Committee of Maryland, Inc. is a community of congressionally chartered veteran organizations in the State of Maryland drawn together by strong bonds of respect and mutual ideas and ideals to promote true patriotism, to pursue by legislation and other activities, to advance the welfare of all veterans, their widows, their orphans, and their dependents. JVC is comprised of the following Maryland Veteran Service Organizations: American Veterans (AMVETS), Marine Corps League (MCL), Military Order of the Purple Heart (MOPH), Catholic War Veterans (CWV), Disabled American Veterans (DAV), and the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the US (VFW).

POC:

Joseph P. Fay USMC/Veteran

JVC Legislative Committee Member

301-247-3830

Jedsdad13@gmail.com

SB 279 Hugh McClean_UMB School of Law.pdf

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

Finance Committee
Miller Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD

Re: Letter in Support of Senate Bill 279

Dear Honorable Committee Members,

I respectfully submit this letter in support of Senate Bill (“SB”) 279, the Business & Insurance 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 279. 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 279. 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 279 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 279 - " Business & Insurance Equality for Servicemembers Act "

I am Senator Bryan Simonaire presenting SB 279.

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 279 which deals with several related articles by updating the terms to be inclusive of all 8 branches in areas, such as:

The Economic and Development Article, which updates the law so:

1. No-interest loans benefits given to reservists applies to all reservists in the Uniformed Services.

The Financial Institutions Article, which updates the law so:

1. Process for expediting licenses given to service members applies to all service members,
2. Update terminology that reflects current meanings, and
3. Participation in the Maryland Technology Internship Program given to service members applies to all service members.

The Insurance Article, which updates the law so:

1. Ensuring Insurance Producers' definitions apply to all Uniformed Services members,
2. Reinstatement of Public Adjusters' licenses given to service members apply to all service members in the Uniformed Services,
3. Limitations on long term care insurance given to service members apply to all service members in the Uniformed Services,
4. Underwriting discrimination protections given to service members apply to all service members in the Uniformed Services
5. Unemployment benefits given to reservists apply to all reservists in the Uniformed Services,
6. Deletes a cross reference of armed forces educational waiver requirements as the referenced section was deleted in HB 265 last session,

7. It revises the Navy Mutual Exemption's reference to 'armed forces or the sea services' to 'uniformed services' as they serve all uniformed service members, and
8. It revises the Auto Insurance section to include all uniformed service members and doesn't only exclude 1 branch of the Uniformed Services.

The Labor & Employment Article, which updates the law so:

1. Process for renewal of licenses given to service members applies to all service members in the Uniformed Services,
2. Considerations for deployment of service members applies to all service members in the Uniformed Services,
3. Hiring preferences given to service members applies to all service members in the Uniformed Services,
4. Considerations given to spouses of service members concerning voluntary leaving employment applies to all service members in the Uniformed Services,
5. Considerations given for the care of service members dealing with serious health conditions applies to all service members in the Uniformed Services,
6. Considerations given on limits of concurrent benefits for service members applies to all service members in the Uniformed Services,
7. Provisions give to reservists applies to all reservists in the Uniformed Services,
8. 'Dislocated Worker' benefits given to service members' spouses who have a permanent relocation or unpaid care for a family member applies to all service members in the Uniformed Services, and
9. Provide clarity in military definitions.

Lastly, the State Finance & Procurement Article, which updates the law so:

1. Veteran-owned Small Business Enterprise opportunities given to veterans apply to all veterans in the Uniformed Services.

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."

SB279_VeteransCaucus_FAV

Uploaded 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: SB279, Employment and Insurance Equality for Serve Members Act
Hearing Date: February 5, 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 279.

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 F. Brooks".

Senator Benjamin Brooks
Senate Chair

cc: Senator Bryan Simonaire

Maryland Military Coalition SB0279 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** – SB0279 – Employment and Insurance 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 **SB0279 – Employment and Insurance Equality for Service Members Act**, sponsored by Senator Bryan Simonaire. The bill will update and change the application of certain provisions of law governing the regulation of business, economic development, insurance, and labor and employment 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 – SB0279 – Employment and Insurance 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 21-26: restore the deleted text in § 1-117 and delete the reference to 38 U.S. Code § 101.
- Page 28, lines 15-18: 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 SB0279** 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