

**Testimony for HB0181/SB0255**

**For Major General Janeen L. Birckhead (House)**

Good afternoon, Chairman Pena-Melnyk, Vice Chair Cullison and members of the Health and Government Operations Committee.

A sincere “thank you” to Chair Pena-Melnyk for agreeing to serve as the primary sponsor of HB0181 which authorizes the Adjutant General to appoint their direct staff in the Maryland Military Department.

HB0181 would simply place in statute the operational reality of the Adjutant General to appoint their senior staff.

Removing this antiquated, and confusing part of Public Safety Article 13-306 meets Governor Moore's FY26 Budget Principles of Modernizing Government. Direct control over personnel will allow future Adjutant Generals to manage their workforce more efficiently and effectively.

The Adjutant General is an appointee of the Governor, and the lead state official of the Maryland Military Department.

To have a Chief of Staff and aides appointed by, and serve at the pleasure to the Governor is not consistent with Section 13-302, which allows the Adjutant General to appoint key select staff. This would have a potential impact on the chain of command and endanger the highly-regarded cohesion of the department.

The Adjutant General has the statutory authority under Section 13-302 to appoint a range of key positions within the department, including a chief of state operations, an executive officer, an administrative officer, and several other critical roles.

The Chief of Staff for the Maryland Military Department functions in a capacity similar to these senior leaders, making it logical and consistent for The Adjutant General to have the authority to appoint this position as well.

The Governor will continue to have the authority to appoint significant leadership roles such as the Assistant Adjutants General for both the Maryland Army National Guard and the Maryland Air National Guard, as well as a Deputy Assistant Adjutant General.

This bill, therefore, seeks to eliminate redundancy and confusion by aligning the appointment of the Chief of Staff with the existing practice and statutory framework that grants the Adjutant General the ability to appoint key civilian and uniformed senior leaders within the department.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

I am able to take any questions you may have.