



MARYLAND MILITARY COALITION

Serving Veterans through Legislative Advocacy

January 17, 2025

The Honorable Joseline A. Pena-Melnyk
Chair, Health and Government Operations Committee
240 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Subject: **Request for FAVORABLE Report** – HB0142 – State Government – Veterans and Military Families Ombudsman -- Establishment

Dear Chair Pena-Melnyk and distinguished members of the Health and Government Operations Committee:

On behalf of the members of the Maryland Military Coalition (MMC), I write to recommend a **FAVORABLE report** by the Committee on **HB0142 – State Government – Veterans and Military Families Ombudsman –Establishment**, sponsored by Delegate April Miller. This bill establishes an ombudsman position within the Department of Veterans and Military Families (“DVMF”) with the primary mission of serving as a resource to veterans and military families regarding their rights and access to services.

HB0142 will **help strengthen the link** between the DVMF and the state’s approximately 360,000 veterans,¹ 35,700 active-duty service members, and 25,600 National Guard and Federal Reserve members.² The value of establishing an ombudsman position is that it will **offer a neutral, confidential space for veterans and members of the uniformed services community of Maryland** to raise concerns, investigate complaints, and facilitate conflict resolution without the fear of retaliation. Establishment of an ombudsman position **will also result in providing feedback to the DVMF and the Legislature** about issues affecting the uniformed services community in Maryland so that proactive steps can be taken to address them.

The Maryland Military Coalition **strongly supports** HB0142 and asks for a **FAVORABLE** report from the Health and Government Operations Committee.

¹ <https://veterans.maryland.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2024/04/2024-Annual-Report-FINAL-4.pdf>, Maryland Department of Veterans and Military Families 2024 Annual Report

² <https://statepolicy.militaryonesource.mil/state/MD>, Demographic Data, DMDC, December 31, 2023

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The Maryland Military Coalition is a registered non-profit, non-partisan advocacy organization comprised of 22 prominent Maryland-based veteran and military groups, representing over 150,000 service-connected individuals, including those currently serving, veterans, retirees and their families, caregivers, and survivors. Visit our website at <https://www.mdmilcoalition.org/>.

We want to thank Delegate Miller for sponsoring this legislation and for her support of the uniformed services community in Maryland.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David L. Dragics". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

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