

HB0142_RichardKaplowitz_FAV
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TESTIMONY ON HB#0142 – FAVORABLE

State Government - Veterans and Military Families Ombudsman - Establishment

TO: Chair Atterbeary, Vice Chair Wilkins, and members of the Ways and Means Committee

FROM: Richard Keith Kaplowitz

My name is Richard K. Kaplowitz. I am a resident of District 3, Frederick County. I am submitting this testimony in support of HB#0142, **State Government - Veterans and Military Families Ombudsman - Establishment**

While the different branches of the services have ombudsman this bill will supplement the services the state of Maryland can provide to affected veterans and military families. The function of an ombudsman in the military varies by service. What are the functions of an Ombudsman? An Ombudsman communicates regularly with command families, provides information and outreach to command families, provides appropriate referral resources, and acts as an advocate for command families. This bill will standardize the role regardless of the service of the affected clients.

This bill will establish the Veterans and Military Families Ombudsman within the Department of Veterans and Military Families and establish the purpose of the Ombudsman to serve as a resource to provide information and support to veterans and military families regarding their rights and access to services. To better related to people seeking the Ombudsman service this bill will require the Ombudsman to be a veteran. The methodology for provision of services will require the Ombudsman to arrange for a toll-free telephone number to assist any individual seeking information or advice about available services. Finally, to aid the state to control and evaluate successes and failures of the office it will add a requirement for the Ombudsman to submit an annual report.

The more the state of Maryland does for our veterans and their families the stronger the bond between those who serve and those who honor and respect that service. Maryland can be a leader in our care for these affected individuals and families.

I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on HB#0142.

