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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 182 - Maryland Veterans Service Animal Program - Eligibility - Family Members of Veterans

I am Senator Simonaire presenting SB 182.

The **Maryland Veterans Service Animal Program** has been successfully operating since 2017 when I first introduced the legislation.

The **Department and the non-profits** have done an amazing job as it has helped many veterans. **Initially**, the program was limited to service animal dogs, but then there was an opportunity to expand it to Horse Therapy that helped veterans...And we did successfully!

I have **visited numerous non-profit sites**, and I can tell you they are top notch and love what they are doing.

I have also attended ceremonies where the service animal was formally presented to our veterans.

This program is a **success by any measure**, and **today** we are here to expand its reach once more.

This bill expands the program to veteran families as we know they deal with challenges just as real as the veteran themselves.

Of course, the **Department has discretion** as they go through the application process.

As you know, we **changed the Department's name** last year to be the "*Department of Veterans and Military Families*" and this **aligns** with the goal of supporting military families.

I can go into greater detail, but **not seeing any opposition**, I will leave it at that and ask for your favorable consideration.