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Legislative District 8

Maryland House of Delegates / Health and Government Operations Committee

Honorable Members,

I am writing today to express my support for House Bill 0548, otherwise known as the Defend the Guard Act. I am a lifelong citizen of Maryland. My family, on both sides, have served in the military and have served honorably in wartime. On my mother's side, our family's service dates back to John Coggeshall of Massachusetts, a member of the Continental Army who fought in this nation's War of Independence. My maternal grandparents met during World War II, while both were serving in the military. My paternal grandfather was Captain Alvin Conlin, who served in the U.S. Army and was awarded the Distinguished Service Medal, Class IV by the Republic of Korea in 1951. His older brother, James Conlin, was killed in action in France in 1918. My father, Captain Ralph P. Conlin, volunteered for the Army after finishing college at the University of Maryland in 1966. He served as a Military Policeman in the 196th Light Infantry Brigade, later joining the reconstituted Americal Division in Chu Lai, Vietnam. I am proud to come from such a family of dedicated patriots.

I was unable to join the U.S. Army due to a hip condition. I tried in vain in 2001. I began working instead as a civilian DoD contractor in 2009. I worked with civilian charter airlines that transported troops around the world. My work took me to U.S. and foreign military bases in 44 states and 21 countries, including many trips to Iraq. I have spent much time in the company of National Guard soldiers.

The Defend The Guard Act is one that honors these men and women. It does not seek to weaken the MD National Guard or the United States' defense posture or war-fighting readiness and effectiveness. I would not support any bill that did so. This bill seeks a return to the proper role of the state militia as proscribed by the United States' Constitution.

The Maryland National Guard should only be deployed for combat operations when a formal Declaration of War has been made by the United States' Congress. Absent that, the National Guard should serve the interests of Maryland as determined by the Governor and the legislature. This bill does not restrict the National Guard's ability to train for combat, or to be deployed for humanitarian and other non-combat roles both within the United States or abroad.

This bill seeks to ensure that the National Guard stands ready and available to serve and defend the State of Maryland as intended, and not be deployed as simply a force multiplier in any current or future undeclared overseas war.

This bill, in other states, has received wide and bipartisan support.

This bill supports Maryland families, citizens and the Constitution.

Many testimonies today will highlight the legal and constitutional case for HB0548. I appreciate the opportunity to testify as a strong supporter of the men and women who serve, have served, and will serve. I trust the Committee today will review and give consideration to this bill.

Sincerely yours,

Andrew S. Conlin, Sr.

Nottingham, MD