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**HB466 - "Health Equality for Servicemembers Act"**

HB466 is the crossfile to Senator Bryan Simonaire's SB277 which is part of package of bills that represents the most comprehensive overhaul of military law in our state's modern history.

We have worked directly with the Uniformed Services, military advocates, federal and state agencies, military legal experts and our DLS legal counsel to draft a consensus and workable solution.

**HB466** updates the Health Articles primarily.

The Health General Articles updates extend current benefits to all our service members, such as:

1. No fee collected for birth certificates,
2. Recording all veterans admitted to hospitals,
3. Consideration for relocation to our state or temporary deployment out of our state,
4. Making behavioral health services available, and
5. Providing access to PTSD treatments for all service members.

A recent study showed how Commissioned Corps Officers of PHS are dealing with PTSD in their stressful line of work across the world.

The other section of this bill dealing with the Health Occupations Article simply updates the 'Servicemember' definition to refer to the US Code's 'uniformed service' definition opposed to just the 'armed forces' and aligns with Federal law and thereby include all branches of the uniformed services of the United States.

The Health Occupations Article provisions updated in this Article all apply to 6 of the 8 Unformed Service branches. This bill updates these current provisions to all 8 of our service members, such as:

1. Revising terminology so all service member spouses are treated equally,
2. Board to consider giving credits for training and education received in the Uniformed Services,
3. Board to give consideration during renewal of license when service member deployed overseas,
4. Providing the Health Occupation Board with information on culture in the Uniformed Services,  
and
5. Waive the optometry examination if certain standards met for all service members.

Lastly, I would note that in general, these bills are **not changing the underlying policy but providing equality among our service members** and worked very hard to keep the **fiscal note to zero** or within all the Department's current budget.

I ask for your favorable consideration of HB466.