



HB548 – Defend the Guard SUPPORT

Chairwoman Pena-Melnyk and Members of the Committee,

I am writing on behalf of the **State Freedom Caucus Network** in strong support of HB548, the Defend the Guard Act. This legislation is essential to ensuring that Maryland's National Guard is deployed only in accordance with constitutional principles and the rule of law.

Under Article I, Section 8 of the U.S. Constitution, only Congress has the authority to declare war. Yet, for far too long, our National Guard troops have been sent into active combat overseas without a formal declaration of war by Congress. This undermines both the constitutional role of the legislative branch and the duty of states to safeguard their own citizens. HB548 restores the proper balance of power by prohibiting the deployment of Maryland's National Guard into active duty combat unless Congress fulfills its constitutional obligation.

Our National Guard is meant to protect Maryland and assist in times of emergency—whether responding to natural disasters, civil unrest, or public health crises. Yet, in recent decades, these men and women have been called to serve in undeclared, prolonged foreign conflicts, leaving our state with fewer resources and families with unnecessary hardship. This is not only a matter of constitutional integrity but also of protecting the well-being of our troops and their families.

This bill is not about national defense; it is about ensuring that when our servicemen and women are sent into combat, it is done properly—through a congressional declaration of war, as the Founders intended. If Congress believes a conflict is worth fighting, it should have the courage to debate and vote on it rather than bypassing the constitutional process.

For these reasons, I urge the committee to give HB548 a favorable report and stand up for the constitutional role of both our state and federal government. Our troops and their families deserve nothing less.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Ali Rak
Maryland State Director
State Freedom Caucus Network