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**Department of Veterans and Military Families - Communications, Outreach, and
Advocacy Program - Alterations
Health and Government Operations Committee
MARCH 25 2025
FAVORABLE**

Good afternoon, Chair Pena-Melnyk, Vice Chair Cullison and members of the Health and Government Operations Committee. I am Jim Campbell, President Emeritus of AARP Maryland, speaking in strong support of SB 309. This bill expands the Communications, Outreach, and Advocacy Program in the Department of Veterans and Military Families (DVMF) to include providing services to (1) service members and (2) the families of veterans and service members. The Secretary of Veterans and Military Families must include in their annual report a general assessment of communication methods utilized in support of the program.

AARP is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to advocating for healthcare, financial security, affordable utilities, and protections against financial abuse for Maryland's 850,000+ members, including many older veterans and military families.

SB 309 is essential because:

- It enhances access to critical resources by providing a centralized platform for veterans and military families to receive vital information on benefits, healthcare, financial assistance, and state services.
- It ensures transparency and accountability by requiring the Secretary of Veterans and Military Families to report annually on the registry's usage, new enrollees, and subscriptions.
- It particularly benefits older veterans, many of whom face challenges in accessing the services they have earned through their service.
- It provides military families with up-to-date information about available programs, financial assistance, healthcare options, and community support networks.

AARP Maryland recognizes the sacrifices made by veterans and their families. This online registry will bridge gaps in communication and ensure veterans—especially older veterans—are informed and supported.

For these reasons, AARP Maryland urges a Favorable report on SB 309. For questions or additional information, please contact Tammy Bresnahan, Senior Director of Advocacy, at tbresnahan@aarp.org or 410-302-8451.