



**Maryland Department of Veterans and Military Families
Office of the Secretary**

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**Dana Burl, DVMF Deputy Secretary for Military Family Policy and Programs
TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF House Bill 196
House Health and Government Operations Committee
January 21, 2025**

Good afternoon Chair Pena-Melnyk, Vice Chair Cullison, and Members of the Health and Government Operations Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on HB196. My name is Dana Burl, and I serve as Deputy Secretary for Military Family Policy and Programs with the Department of Veterans and Military Families (DVMF). Our mission is to guide veterans and their families through life's transitions and to position Maryland as the premier state for veterans and their loved ones.

To fulfill this mission, DVMF prioritizes honoring those who have served by preserving our veteran memorials as well as enhancing operational efficiency for commissions and boards. Today, I am here to express our support for HB196, a bill focused on the War Memorial Commission, the Maryland Veterans Trust Fund, and the Maryland Veterans Commission.

The War Memorial Commission, established in 1924, oversees the War Memorial Building, with day-to-day operations managed by the City of Baltimore under our agency's oversight. Over time, commissioner appointments and attendance at commission meetings has declined. To streamline operations, we recommend eliminating the War Memorial Commission and in turn granting oversight responsibilities to our cemetery and memorial program. Additionally, we propose giving DVMF the authority to adopt regulations, in partnership with the City of Baltimore, to ensure the building's historical integrity is preserved. Staff of the City of Baltimore will continue to manage day-to-day operations at the War Memorial Building; DVMF's oversight will be high-level, not intended to supplant the City's role in operating the site and not altering the existing cost-sharing arrangement between DVMF and the City.

To improve efficiency and ensure quorum during Trust Fund board meetings, HB196 also proposes adjusting the voting status of certain members on the Maryland Veterans Trust Fund board. By changing the voting status for Senate and House appointees, the board will be better equipped to address trust fund matters despite vacancies or absences.

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TTY USERS CALL VIA MD RELAY

Lastly, this bill addresses challenges in filling seats on the Maryland Veterans Commission due to the aging out or inactivity of certain organizations. We recommend revising membership to include a nonprofit actively serving Maryland's military-connected community. The bill also gives the department discretionary authority to remove certain seats as needed, minimizing the need for future legislative amendments.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on HB196. We respectfully request a favorable vote on this bill and value your continued support for Maryland's veterans and their families.

Sincerely,

Dana Burl
Deputy Secretary, Military Family Policy and Programs
Department of Veterans and Military Families