

Delegate Joseline A. Pena-Melnyk  
Chair, Health and Government Operations Committee

Re: HB0448, Modernization of Maryland Military Laws Act

Dear Delegate Pena-Melnyk,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony on HB0448. My name is James Brinkley, and I am providing this testimony in my personal capacity as President of the Association of Commissioned Officers (ACO), a non-partisan membership organization dedicated to advocating for the officers, retirees and families of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Commissioned Officer Corps (NOAA Corps).

The ACO firmly agrees with the intent of this legislation to effectively clarify and harmonize legislative language when used in any respect to refer to the USA, USN, USAF, USMC, USSF, USCG, PHS Commissioned Corps, and the NOAA Corps.

The NOAA Corps is composed of a dedicated team of nearly 364 highly skilled professionals, including mariners, aviators, engineers, and scientists. Together, we operate a fleet of 15 research vessels, 10 aircraft, and a variety of uncrewed systems that are integral to the Corps' diverse operations. On a daily basis, the NOAA Corps executes vital scientific missions that directly impact the safety, economy, and environmental health of our Nation. Our officers fly into hurricanes to collect real-time weather data, helping to safeguard lives and property. We conduct underwater mapping to chart the ocean floor, which is essential for ensuring safe navigation and promoting sustainable management of our resources. In essence, the NOAA Corps bridges the gap between scientific research and real-world operational execution. We deliver actionable environmental intelligence that informs the decisions of policymakers and benefits the public. Whether here in Maryland or across the country, our work supports the safety, well-being, and prosperity of our Nation.

In Maryland specifically, the NOAA Corps has played a pivotal role in responding to emergencies. For example, after the tragic bridge collapse in Baltimore, NOAA Corps officers worked quickly to collect critical data both from the water and through aerial surveys, enabling the swift creation of alternative, safe shipping routes. Our officers in the region also map the dynamic Chesapeake Bay regularly, providing key data that is used to protect and manage this crucial body of water.

I would like to thank both Delegate Kipke and Senator Simonaire, and co-sponsors of this very useful legislation, which will actively avoid any possible future confusion with legislative language concerning factors and benefits applicable to all the above-mentioned services. In conclusion, as HB0448 (and its Senate cross-file SB0275) move along in the legislative process, the ACO asks for a FAVORABLE recommendation.

With respect,

James Brinkley  
2616 18<sup>th</sup> Street South  
Arlington, VA 22204  
571-278-5863  
mesoscale355@yahoo.com