



MARYLAND MILITARY COALITION

Serving Veterans through Legislative Advocacy

February 7, 2025

The Honorable Joseline A. Pena-Melnyk
Chair, Health and Government Operations Committee
240 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Subject: Request for **FAVORABLE Report** – HB0455 – Braille Flag Memorial Act of 2025

Dear Chair Pena-Melnyk and distinguished members of the Health and Government Operations Committee:

On behalf of the members of the Maryland Military Coalition (MMC), I write to recommend a **FAVORABLE** by the Committee on HB0455 – Braille Flag Memorial Act of 2025 sponsored by Delegate Anne R. Kaiser. In 2008, the United States Congress recognized the importance of providing the visually impaired and the blind an opportunity to understand the sense of pride when looking at our nation's flag. Congress did this by authorizing a tactile placard, representing the American flag, in braille. This bill will authorize the Department of Veterans and Military Families to designate an American braille tactile flag to be placed in one or more State veterans' cemeteries.

Veterans have had the opportunity to see the American flag and feel their individual sense of pride that came with their service and sacrifices to their Nation. Family members, and the public that are blind from birth, have no concept of what the stars and stripes mean for the sighted.

To simply state that red symbolizes hardiness and valor, white symbolizes purity and innocence, and blue represents vigilance, perseverance and justice, have very little meaning to the blind. To help the blind understand the significance of Red, White, and Blue, the sighted must adjust their descriptive language like describing red as a "hot", loud color, white as smooth and quiet, or blue as "calm" like water; essentially, associating colors with tangible experiences they can understand through their other senses. Telling them, the feeling they felt when they first learned to read braille, is the same warm feeling the sighted feel when they look at the American flag.

The Maryland Military Coalition **strongly supports HB0455** and asks for a **FAVORABLE report**. In 2008, the United States' congressional bodies understood the importance of providing the

Subject: Request for FAVORABLE Report – HB0455 – Braille Flag Memorial Act of 2025

visually impaired, and the blind, a tactile way of understanding the pride that comes with “seeing” the American flag. If this can be done at Arlington National Cemetery, Maryland should unanimously echo that same message by installing a Braille Flag Memorial at all five State veterans’ cemeteries

The Maryland Military Coalition is a registered non-profit, nonpartisan advocacy organization comprised of 22 prominent Maryland-based veteran and military groups. It represents over 150,000 service-connected individuals, including those currently serving, veterans, retirees and their families, caregivers and survivors. Visit our website at <https://mdmilcoalition.org/>.

We want to thank Delegate Kaiser for sponsoring this legislation and for supporting the uniformed services, and the community of the visually impaired and blind in Maryland.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David L. Dragics". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized 'D' and 'D'.

David L. Dragics
COL (Ret), U.S. Army
Legislative Director



Member Organizations of the Maryland Military Coalition

Air Force Sergeants Association

American Military Society

American Minority Veterans Research Project

Association of the United States Navy

Commissioned Officers Association of the U.S. Public Health Service

Disabled American Veterans

Fleet Reserve Association of Annapolis

Jewish War Veterans of the U.S.A

Maryland Air National Guard Retirees' Association

National Active and Retired Federal Employees, Maryland Veterans

Maryland Veterans Chamber of Commerce

Military Officers Association of America

Military Order of the Purple Heart

Military Order of the World Wars

Montford Point Marines of America

National Association of Black Veterans

National Active and Retired Federal Employees, Maryland Veterans

Naval Enlisted Reserve Association

NOAA Association of Commissioned Officers

Platoon 22

Reserve Organization of America

Society of Military Widows

Veterans of Foreign Wars