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Baltimore County

Education, Energy, and the
Environment Committee
Energy Subcommittee

Chair, Joint Electric Universal
Service Program Workgroup



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SB 273
Peace Orders and Protective Orders – Military Protection Orders

Judicial Proceedings Committee
January 30, 2024

Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and Members of the Committee.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you on SB 273, Peace Orders and Protective Orders - Military Protection Orders. The purpose of this bill is to close two gaps when it comes to protecting victims of abuse and harassment in Maryland. First, the bill allows judges to take into consideration the existence of a Military Protective Order (MPO) when hearing cases for temporary relief. Second, the bill establishes a line of communication between civilian and military law enforcement when service members violate their MPOs.

Temporary peace and protective orders exist to provide Marylanders immediate protection from harm, harassment, and/or abuse. If a judge finds reasonable grounds to believe that the respondent has committed and is likely to commit future harm against the petitioner, then the judge may issue a temporary peace or protective order, pending full adjudication.

Similarly, an MPO is an order issued by a commanding officer to protect a victim of alleged abuse, harassment, or threats by restricting the actions and movements of the accused service member. While MPOs function like temporary peace and protective orders, they are not subject to enforcement by civilian authorities outside of a military installation. This creates an unintended gap in protecting victims of harassment and/or abuse in our State. Moreover, Maryland judges are also not explicitly allowed to consider whether an individual has an MPO when issuing a temporary peace or protective order against them.

SB 273 closes both of these gaps by explicitly allowing judges to consider an MPO in a temporary peace or protective order hearing if the MPO was issued for a similar offense against the same person. Additionally, the bill also requires Maryland law enforcement to notify military law enforcement if they have probable cause to believe that an individual has violated their MPO.

To clarify, Maryland judges will not be required to issue a temporary peace or protective order if an individual has an MPO. Additionally, the bill does not require Maryland law enforcement to enforce an MPO. SB 273 simply informs the military if a service member has violated an

MPO while off a military installation and allows judges to consider an MPO when determining whether or not to issue a temporary peace or protective order.

Through the implementation of interpersonal violence policies at the state level, we empower victims, deter offenders and create an environment for military families that is conducive to resilience and readiness.

For these reasons, I am requesting a favorable report on SB 273.

With kindest regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Benjamin F. Brooks".

Benjamin Brooks