

Chair Smith, Vice Chair Kagan and members of this committee.
Thank you for this opportunity to address you regarding Senate Bill 48.

My name is Joseph Pruden and I am addressing you behalf of the nearly 81,000 members of the American Legion Family in 157 posts throughout the State of Maryland.

As proud veterans and advocates for our military and veteran communities, we strongly believe this legislation is a critical step forward in aligning Maryland's laws with federal standards. By standardizing definitions and broadening the scope of who is recognized as a veteran, this bill ensures equitable access to members of the Public Health Service and NOAA.

This assures that all who have served in uniform will receive benefits and resources they deserve.

This modernization is not just about updating language; it's about honoring the sacrifices of all service members and ensuring they receive the support they've earned.

We thank Senator Bryan Simonaire for his efforts and for sponsoring this bill.

We urge your favorable consideration of this legislation.

Thank you.