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**SB179 Motor Vehicle Registration – Fee Exemption- Unemployed Disabled Veterans
FAVORABLE
Judicial Proceedings Committee
January 22, 2025**

Good afternoon, Chair Smith and Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee. I am Karen Kalla, AARP Maryland volunteer legislative aide and resident of Montgomery County. AARP Maryland represents more than 850,000 members statewide and is the largest nonprofit, nonpartisan organization advocating for Marylanders aged 50 and older, as well as their families. AARP's priorities include helping all Marylanders achieve financial security and access to affordable utilities and healthcare. AARP Maryland supports SB179 Motor Vehicle Registration – Fee Exemption – Unemployed Disabled Veterans. We thank Senator Smith for sponsoring this bill.

What SB179 Does

- Exempts from Maryland vehicle registration fees, one vehicle owned by, or leased to and personally used by a veteran who is unemployable due to a service-connected disability.
- Exempts from Maryland vehicle registration fees, one vehicle owned and personally used by an individual who is the surviving spouse of a deceased disabled veteran.
- SB179 will take effect October 1, 2025.

Why This Matters

Veterans serve our country and people, putting their lives and livelihoods in jeopardy to protect and preserve our democracy and quality of life. As they transition to civilian life, many will be unable to work due to injuries sustained in the line of duty. In 2023, Maryland had approximately 348,459 veterans living in the state. Of those, 83,978 or 23.8% had a service-connected disability.

It is incumbent upon our local, state, and national governments to make sure that we acknowledge the sacrifices of our veterans by providing them with benefits lost because of their service to our country. In this case, the lost benefit is that of certain abilities and employment to support themselves and their families.

- An exemption for vehicle registration fees might be the difference in a disabled unemployed veteran affording to own their own vehicle and means of transportation, taking some burden off publicly subsidized or other forms of transportation.
- Knowing they will be adequately supported upon return to civilian life, provides greater incentive for individuals to enlist in military services.

Broader Context – Service-Connected Disability Status

The Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs 2022 Report states:

- According to the US Census, compared to civilian counterparts, veterans today are more likely to suffer from trauma-related injuries, substance abuse, and mental health disorders.
- Compared to veterans of other service eras, Post 9/11 veterans have a significantly higher chance (43%) of having a service-connected disability and to have a rating of 70% or higher (39%).
- Among all veterans, men are no more likely to have a disability than women, but women are more likely to have a rating of 70% or higher.
- According to the VA, in December 2022 Post 9/11 veteran claims made up 24% of the total inventory, Gulf War made up 36%, and combined Vietnam, peacetime, and other eras made up 44%.

While the costs of SB179 might seem problematic in the short run, the benefits gained from those who have militarily served our country are incalculable. AARP believes we must honor the service and acknowledge the sacrifice of our veterans. SB179 does so, by providing greater economic viability for disabled, unemployable veterans and their dependents.

For these reasons, AARP Maryland respectfully requests a favorable report for SB179. For questions or more information, please contact Tammy Bresnahan, Senior Director of Advocacy at tbresnahan@aarp.org or by calling 410-302-8451.