

Maryland Military Coalition SB0179 Written Testimo

Uploaded by: DAVID Dragics

Position: FAV



MARYLAND MILITARY COALITION

Serving Veterans through Legislative Advocacy

January 20, 2025

The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr.
Chair, Judicial Proceedings Committee
2 East Miller Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

Subject: **Request FAVORABLE Report** – SB0179 – Motor Vehicle Registration – Fee Exemption –
Unemployable Disabled Veterans

Dear Chair Smith and distinguished members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee:

On behalf of the members of the Maryland Military Coalition (MMC), I write to **recommend a FAVORABLE report on SB0179 – Motor Vehicle Registration – Fee Exemption – Unemployable Disabled Veterans**, sponsored by yourself. This bill would exempt from registration fees one vehicle that is either owned, leased, or personally used by an unemployable disabled veteran.

This legislation recognizes the sacrifices made by unemployable disabled veterans and the financial burden that registration fees place upon them. It includes them with other veterans who, as designated or classified by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, have lost the use of a hand, arm, or leg, are totally disabled; have permanent vision impairment; or are the surviving spouses of a deceased disabled veteran.

The Maryland Military Coalition **strongly supports SB0179** and **asks for a FAVORABLE report** from the Judicial Proceedings Committee. These unemployable disabled veterans deserve this exemption.

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

We want to thank Senator Smith for sponsoring this legislation and for supporting the uniformed services community in Maryland.

Respectfully,

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

SB179.pdf

Uploaded by: James Horris

Position: FAV



January 20, 2025

The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr., Chair
Judicial Proceedings Committee

Re: Senate Bill 179 - Motor Vehicle Registration – Fee Exemption – Unemployable Disabled Veterans

Position: ***Support***

Chair Smith and Vice Chair Waldstreicher:

On behalf of the Military Order of the Purple Heart (MOPH), I am writing to express our ***support*** to Senate Bill 179 - Motor Vehicle Registration – Fee Exemption – Unemployable Disabled Veterans. Currently, Maryland vehicle owners are assessed a fee based on vehicle registration types. While the fee is not egregious, it still adds to the general cost of vehicle ownership and operator maintenance. SB 179 would remove this blanket fee for unemployable, service-disabled veterans.

While the motor vehicle registration fee is not arbitrary, and given the volume of motorists in the state, adds to the general revenue of the state of Maryland, the net negative effect on Maryland for relieving this small and distinguished demographic would be marginal. Conversely, the effect on the unemployable, disabled, veteran community would be impactful. In a situations like the ones in which those veterans find themselves, every cent counts.

Additionally, oftentimes theses veterans find themselves without the necessary resources needed to progress. With the removal of this fee, these disabled veterans will find the pressure relief needed in at least one more area of their lives so they can better allocate their funds and energies to moving forward with their lives.

The changes proposed would help and positively enable a key sector of our economy and society. We respectfully urge a ***favorable*** report on SB 179.

James M. Horris, MBA

sb179_AARP_FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Karen Kalla

Position: FAV



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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.

SB179

Uploaded by: Kimberly Shiloh

Position: FAV



MARYLAND GENERAL ASSEMBLY
VETERANS CAUCUS

January 21, 2025

Senator Will Smith, Chair
Judicial Proceedings Committee
2E Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: SB179, Motor Vehicle Registration – Fee Exemption – Unemployable Disabled Veterans
Hearing Date: January 22, 2025

Dear Chairman Smith,

Please let this letter serve as notice of the support of the Maryland General Assembly Senate Veterans Caucus for Senate Bill 179.

After review by our respective legislative committee, the Senate Veterans Caucus believes that the above-mentioned legislation would provide a valuable benefit to the veterans of the State of Maryland and requests a favorable report.

With kindest regards,

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

Senator Benjamin Brooks
Senate Chair

cc: Senator Will Smith

2025 JVC HB0248 SB0179 Vehicle Registration Fee Ex

Uploaded by: Deborah Rey

Position: UNF



JOINT VETERANS COMMITTEE OF MARYLAND, Inc.
TESTIMONY

HB0248 / SB0179 Motor Vehicle Registration – Fee Exemption – Unemployable Disabled Veterans
20 January 2025

House Hearing: Environment and Transportation 30 January 2025 1:30pm

Senate Hearing: Judicial Proceedings 22 January 2025 10:00am

The Maryland Joint Veterans Committee (JVC) **OPPOSES** HB0248 / SB0179 Motor Vehicle Registration – Fee Exemption – Unemployable Disabled Veterans for the following reasons:

- The bill's new language specifically calls out UNEMPLOYABLE veterans can only receive exemption for 1 vehicle and it must be service related
- This bill discriminates against UNEMPLOYABLE veteran because they are being deprived the same benefits their counterparts who can work
 - Only focuses on individuals who are unemployable and restricts them to exemption of 1 vehicle registration fees
 - Individuals who lost the use of a hand, arm, leg, sight or are 100% disabled but able to work are unlimited in the number of vehicles exempt from fees
- The VA categories of Total disability individual unemployability means the individual cannot work and is on a fixed income
 - UNEMPLOYABLE disabled veterans may require more than 1 vehicle to assist the unemployable veteran
- One reason some disabled veterans have remained in Maryland is due to this benefit

The JVC encourages an **UNFAVORABLE** vote.

Additionally, we would like to bring your attention to the Maryland Department of Transportation's implementation of this law in regards to veterans. Per their 2024 written testimony on HB0716, MDOT said "The MVA requires a customer present a letter from Veteran Affairs (VA) confirming the customer's 100% disabled status in order to issue the license plate set." In doing so, MDOT has placed great restrictions on veterans to obtain this benefit than the law provides. If you lose use of a hand, arm or leg due to service, this does not mean the VA will rate you 100% disabled. We recommend you review the processes and procedures established by MDOT in relation to this code to ensure the veterans are receiving the benefits prescribed by MD law.

The Joint Veterans Committee of Maryland, Inc. is a community of congressionally chartered veteran organizations in the State of Maryland drawn together by strong bonds of respect and mutual ideas and ideals to promote true patriotism, to pursue by legislation and other activities, to advance the welfare of all veterans, their widows, their orphans, and their dependents. JVC is comprised of the following Maryland Veteran Service Organizations: American Veterans (AMVETS), Marine Corps League (MCL), Military Order of the Purple Heart (MOPH), Catholic War Veterans (CWV), Disabled American Veterans (DAV), and the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the US (VFW).

POC:



JOINT VETERANS COMMITTEE OF MARYLAND, Inc.

TESTIMONY

HB0248 / SB0179 Motor Vehicle Registration – Fee Exemption – Unemployable Disabled Veterans

20 January 2025

House Hearing: Environment and Transportation 30 January 2025 1:30pm

Senate Hearing: Judicial Proceedings 22 January 2025 10:00am

Deborah C Rey, Maj, USAF (Ret)

JVC Legislative Chair

301-997-4183

Jvcmd2024@gmail.com

SB0179 - MVA - LOI - Motor Vehicle Registration -

Uploaded by: Patricia Westervelt

Position: INFO

January 22, 2025

The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr.
Chair, Senate Judicial Proceedings
2 East, Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

***RE: Letter of Information – Senate Bill 179 – Motor Vehicle Registration - Fee Exemption
- Unemployable Disabled Veterans***

Dear Chair Smith and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) takes no position on Senate Bill 179 but offers the following information for the Committee’s consideration.

SB 179 would extend registration fee exemptions from the existing 100% disabled veteran requirement to veterans who are unemployable due to a service-connected disability as defined by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

Currently, the Motor Vehicle Administration (MVA) processes exemptions for disabled veterans and offers free registration and free “Disabled Veterans” license plate sets to eligible customers. The MVA requires a customer to present a letter from the VA confirming the customer’s 100% disabled status to issue the license plate set. Under the requirements of this bill, the MVA would be able to accept a VA letter confirming those individuals who have been granted an unemployable rating and accordingly qualify for exemptions from vehicle registration fees. Unlike 100% disabled veterans, this proposal will limit eligible vehicles to just one personally used vehicle that is owned by or leased to an unemployable veteran. The Maryland Department of Veterans and Military Families indicated there are just under 4,000 Marylanders that would qualify for this exemption.

For these reasons, the Maryland Department of Transportation respectfully requests that the Committee consider this information when deliberating Senate Bill 179.

Respectfully submitted,

Christine E. Nizer
Administrator
Maryland Motor Vehicle Administration
410-787-7830

Matthew Mickler
Director of Government Affairs
Maryland Department of Transportation
410-865-1090