



Commissioned Officers Association of the United States Public Health Service

Protecting the interests of the USPHS Commissioned Corps since 1951

Statement of CAPT (R) Lynn Nash

HB 587 – Education – High School Diplomas - Veterans of Armed Conflict

FAVORABLE

For the record, my name is CAPT Lynn Nash, here behalf of the Commissioned Officers Association

HB 587 would authorize the granting of a high school diploma to those individuals who left high school before graduating to enlist in the military during armed conflict and who were honorably discharged. This bill recognizes the service of those who set aside their education in order to serve during an armed conflict.

My father, MAJ Marcel Gauthier, is a veteran who would have benefitted from this legislation were he alive today. He left school, enlisted and served during the Korean conflict. He was given a field commission under wartime conditions, promoted from enlisted to officer and placed in command of his unit. He served honorably. He returned home and used his GI benefits to go to trade school as he married and needed to support my mom, and a year later - **ME**. After a 2nd tour on active duty, he returned to the Vermont National Guard, from which he retired. While he was encouraged to get his GED, he never did. He went on to do amazingly well in the granite industry.

Late in his career, he won the contract to build the Vietnam Memorial. He travelled to Vietnam to select the granite. His company sawed and polished the panels, and then “engraved” them with the names of those lost. I earned “pin money” for my college account by proofing the names on the panel.

My dad is an example of those service members who served honorably and returned home, obtained valuable skills and training and served in leadership roles. He leaned all of this while in service of his country. He was a role model, so much that I followed him into service completing a 30 – year career, in both the Army and then the U.S. Public Health Service. And behind me, are my two daughters, LCDR Natalie Slepski-Manning, a Navy flight surgeon and Preventive Medicine Officer and her sister LT Jennifer Kime, a Navy trauma nurse. They also followed him into service. Because of my dad, our family now has three generations of service members.

Any service member who willingly leaves the safety of home to go into war deserves the honor and gratitude of our Nation. The least we can do for these brave men and women is to provide them with the High School diploma that they need to go on with their lives and continue with their contributions to society.

The Commissioned Officers Association ***strongly supports HB 587*** and, on their behalf, I ask the Committee for a **FAVORABLE report**.

Thank you, Delegate Patterson, for your continued commitment to our veterans and the uniformed services community in Maryland.