

To: Chair, Vice-Chair, and Members of the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee

From: Danielle Charles, President-Gold Star Spouses of America -Aberdeen MD

Date: March 31, 2026

Bill: HB 0842 — Property Tax Credit - Surviving Spouse of Military Service Member

Position: FAVORABLE

Testimony in Support of HB 0842

My name is Danielle Charles. I am the widow of Senior Airman Gilnord Charles, but most importantly, I am a mother who had to learn how to raise our children alone. I am writing today to urge a **favorable report on HB 0842**.

When a service member dies, the surviving spouse becomes everything. We are the only ones left to hold the hands of grieving children, the only ones to manage a household, and the only ones to navigate an "administrative avalanche" of federal benefits and military transitions. In an instant, we become the sole foundation for our families.

1. The Weight of Solo Parenting

Grief is not linear, and it certainly doesn't follow a two-year statutory clock. For a Gold Star spouse, those first two years are spent in survival mode—focusing on the mental health of children who have just lost a parent. Research shows these children are at a significantly higher risk for trauma. As the only parent left, my priority was their stability, not rushing into a massive financial commitment like a home purchase just to beat an arbitrary deadline.

2. Cutting the Red Tape with "Maryland Joins Forces"

Governor Moore's **Maryland Joins Forces** initiative aims to "cut the red tape" for military families. The current two-year limit is the definition of red tape. It is a bureaucratic hurdle that forces grieving families to make life-altering decisions while they are at their most vulnerable. By passing HB 0842, you are directly supporting the Governor's mission to make Maryland a place where military families are truly seen and supported, not rushed through their mourning.

3. Honor the Sacrifice, Not the Deadline

The sacrifice my husband made for this country is permanent. The support Maryland offers should not have an expiration date. We are asking you to recognize that Gold Star families do not come "standard issue." Our timelines for healing are as unique as our losses.

Please do not let an arbitrary two-year window stand between a grieving family and the stability of a home. I respectfully request a **FAVORABLE** report on HB 0842.

Sincerely,

Danielle Charles
323 Graceford Drive
Aberdeen, MD 21001