

My name is Autumn Charles. I am 15 years old. My father, Senior Airman Gilnord Charles gave his life for our country when I was only 30 days old. I am writing this today because speaking in front of large crowds about my feelings is hard for me, I am concerned for Gold Star families in Maryland.

For my entire life, I have watched my mom, Danielle Charles, who worked so hard after my dad died to pick up the "shattered pieces." and take care of us. She is an "only parent," doing the job of two people every day to care for me, my brother, and my sister who has Down syndrome. My mom was lucky because someone told her about the property tax credit in time. That support is the reason she could provide us with basic needs like food, clothes, and school supplies.

But I know from talking to my friends who are also Gold Star children that not everyone is that lucky. They talk to me about how it's not fair that they don't have what they need, and how different their lives would be if their dads were still here to provide for them. It hurts to see them struggle. My mom even started a holiday program because a Gold Star mom came to her crying because she couldn't afford a single Christmas gift for her child. No family who has sacrificed so much should have to worry about basic needs like food or bills.

We are often invited to public functions where we are told how grateful the nation is. While those words are kind, it sometimes feels like we are only thought of during those events. In our daily lives, the support doesn't always match the words. It feels like there is an "time frame" on the gratitude we are shown.

By passing HB 0842, you can show us that we are not forgotten and that our families' sacrifices are truly honored. Removing the two-year time limit would give "only

parents" the grace they need to rebuild their lives whenever they are ready, without the fear of missing out on the help they earned. I ask you please consider the real struggles our Gold star families face. Please

consider helping our Gold Star Families and pass house bill 0842.

Sincerely,

Autumn Charles

Gold Star Daughter

Autumn Charles
(digital signature)







