

HB 842 Favorable Danielle Charles GSSA Sign.pdf

Uploaded by: Danielle Charles

Position: FAV

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"

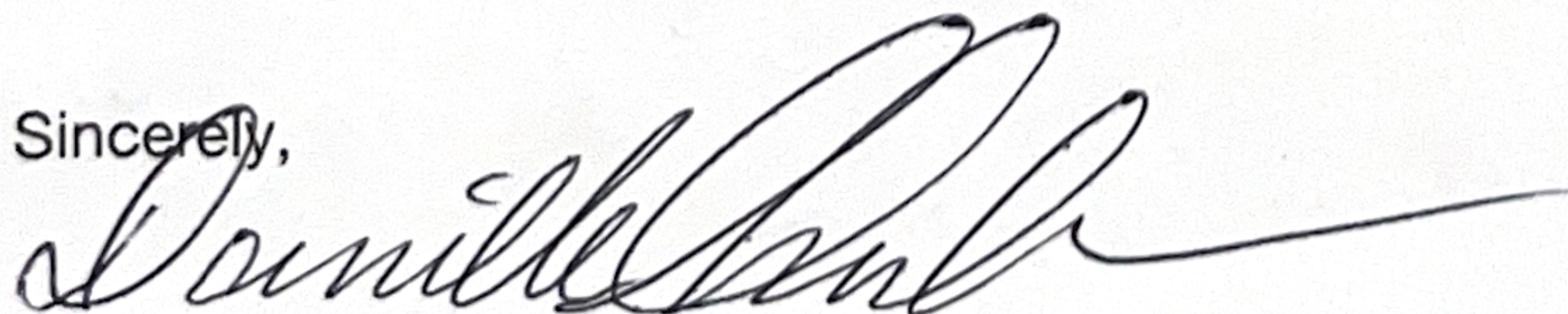
Governor Moore's **Maryland Joins Forces** initiative aims to "cut the red tape" for military families. The current two-year limit is the definition of red tape. It is a bureaucratic hurdle that forces grieving families to make life-altering decisions while they are at their most vulnerable. By passing 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,



Hb 842 Jeremiah Charles for Gold Star Children of

Uploaded by: Danielle Charles

Position: FAV

My name is Jeremiah Charles. I am the son of Senior Airman Gilnord Charles, who died in the line of duty when I was 17 months old and my sister was only one month old. I stand here representing the Gold Star children of Maryland.

While we are often told our parents are heroes, the reality at home is often a quiet struggle. For a Gold Star child, our "Only Parent" is our entire world. But when that parent is buried under the "red tape" of complex benefit processes—which are often so restrictive they feel impossible to navigate—our families are left financially unstable. This bill, by removing the arbitrary two-year limit, cuts through that tape.

Financial stability isn't just about money; it's about mental health. Studies show that Gold Star children face significantly higher risks of depression and suicidal ideation compared to their peers. When our surviving parent is exhausted by financial survival, they cannot focus on the intensive "self-care" required to raise grieving children. A supported parent is a present parent, and a present parent is the best defense against the mental health crises facing children like me. I have too many Gold Star friends struggling with grief and depression and add on things like food insecurity. Gold Star Families in a blink of an eye go from a 2 income household to standing in the food bank lines for dinner. The words "Thank you for your sacrifice alone, don't put food on the table."

The two-year limit on these tax benefits suggests that grief or financial need has an expiration date. It does not. By passing HB 842, you are moving beyond words of gratitude and providing tangible relief. You are telling Maryland's Gold Star children that we are seen, and that our **"Only Parent" deserve the breathing room to help us thrive, not just survive.**

I respectfully urge a **favorable** report on HB 842. Thank you for your time and for honoring my father's memory through your action.

Sincerely,

Jeremiah Charles

Gold Star Son of Senior Airman Gilnord Charles

HB0842_FAV_DanielleCharles.pdf

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Sincerely,

Danielle Charles
323 Graceford Drive
Aberdeen, MD 21001

HB842 favorable Autumn Charles 2026 senate.pdf

Uploaded by: Linda Dolan

Position: FAV

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

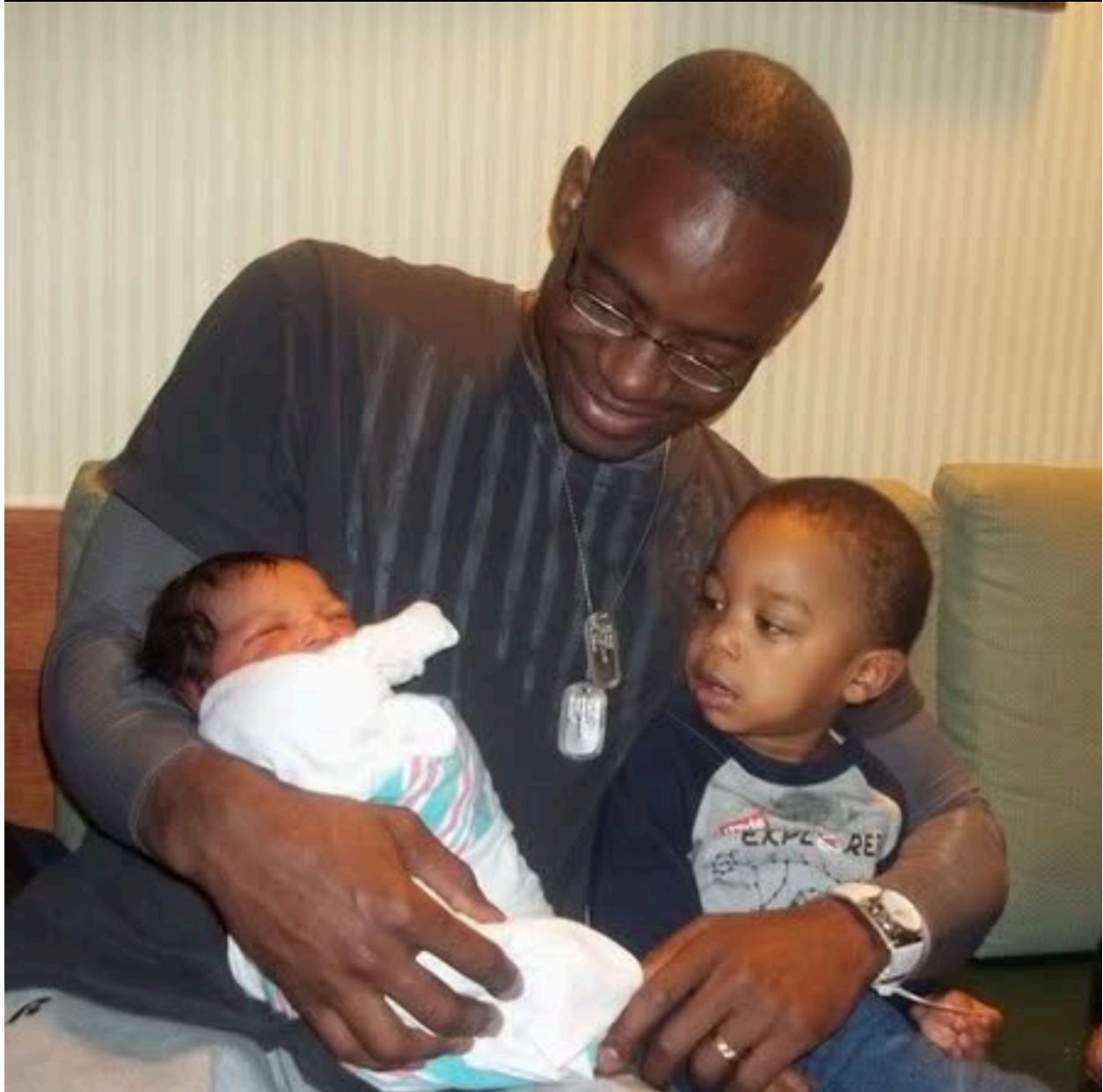
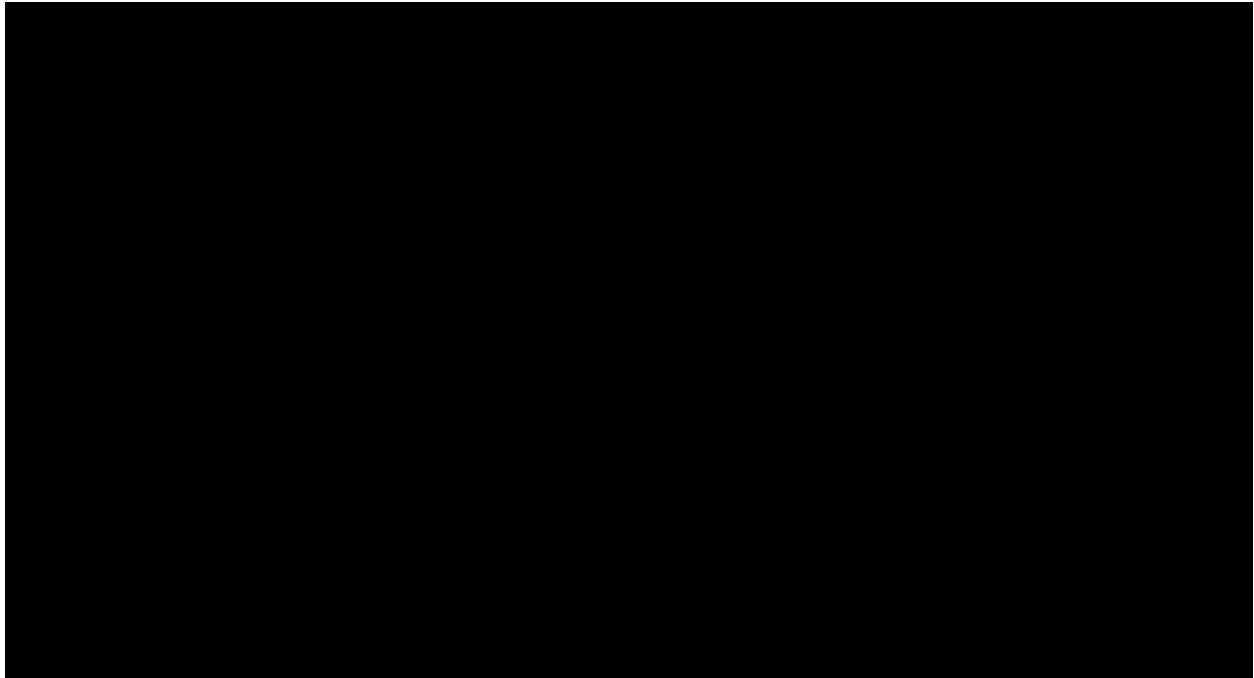
Gold Star Daughter

Autumn Charles
(digital signature)









HB0842_Riva_Gijanto-Burris_Favorable.PDF

Uploaded by: Riva Gijanto-Burris

Position: FAV

Testimony in Support of House Bill 0842

Riva Gijanto-Burris

Surviving Spouse of SFC Jeremy Burris, U.S. Army

My name is Riva Gijanto-Burris. I am the surviving spouse of Sergeant First Class Jeremy Burris, who served our nation honorably for eighteen years. We have two children, who were eight and ten years old when they lost their father.

Like many military families, our lives were defined by sacrifice long before loss. Frequent PCS moves meant we gave up stability, careers, proximity to family, and the ability to establish long-term roots. These sacrifices were not temporary—they shaped every aspect of our lives in service to this country.

Throughout my husband's military career, I was also his primary caregiver as he battled the invisible wounds of service to Iraq and Afghanistan, including PTSD and traumatic brain injury. When he struggled, it was me who carried the weight at home—supporting him through sleepless nights, emotional distress, and the lasting effects of his service. Military spouses do not receive training for this role, yet we become caregivers, advocates, and the foundation that allows our service members to continue their mission.

After his passing, my children and I faced the reality that many military families do—we did not own a home due to the demands of military life. A charitable organization began assisting us in February 2024, and it was not until March 2025 that we were able to move into a permanent home in Cecil County. We chose to make Maryland our permanent residence because of its strong military community, support, and opportunities to continue serving alongside those who understand our sacrifice.

During this time, I was also navigating a nearly three-year probate litigation battle over an outdated will written before our marriage and before our children were born—a process that has cost my family nearly \$160,000 because of abuse of power and greed where laws in place to protect my family were repeatedly challenged and therefore has painfully prolonged litigation. Like many surviving spouses, I was not in a position to immediately purchase a home within a strict timeframe while managing grief, legal hardship, and financial instability.

Maryland's current requirement that surviving spouses purchase and occupy a home within two years of a service member's death does not reflect the realities of military life or loss. It unintentionally excludes families who have sacrificed the most—those who, due to service, never had the opportunity to establish homeownership before tragedy.

House Bill 0842 addresses this gap. It provides fairness. It acknowledges that military families serve together, sacrifice together, and should be supported together.

This bill is not just about my family. It is about ensuring that no surviving military spouse or child is denied relief because their service required them to live a life without stability.

For eighteen years, our family lived in service to this nation—I am asking that Maryland honor not only his sacrifice, but the life our children and I continue to carry forward without him.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

Riva Gijanto-Burris

HB842_FAV_HCGCassilly.pdf

Uploaded by: Robert Cassilly

Position: FAV

ROBERT G. CASSILLY
Harford County Executive



ROBERT S. McCORD
Director of Administration

March 31, 2026

The Honorable Guy Guzzone
Chair, Senate Budget and Taxation Committee
3 West Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: Letter of Support – House Bill 842 – Property Tax Credit – Surviving Spouse of Military Service Member

Dear Chairman Guzzone and Committee Members,

On behalf of the citizens of Harford County, I write to express strong support for House Bill 842.

This bill repeals the current requirement that an unremarried surviving spouse acquire a dwelling within two years of a service member's line-of-duty death to qualify for a real property tax exemption.

This legislation appropriately recognizes the extraordinary sacrifices made by unremarried surviving spouses of service members killed in the line of duty. The existing time limitation imposes an unreasonable burden on families during a period marked by profound grief and the complex legal, financial, and caregiving responsibilities that follow such a loss.

Our nation's Gold Star spouses have endured immeasurable sacrifice while continuing to support their families and communities. This bill affirms our collective responsibility to stand with them during a time of profound transition and Loss, and to honor the service and sacrifice of their loved ones.

I commend the sponsors for advancing this meaningful Legislation and extend my sincere gratitude to the Gold Star families whose strength and resilience inspire us all.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge a favorable report on House Bill 842.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "R. Cassilly", is written over the typed name.

Robert G. Cassilly

HB842_Veterans.pdf

Uploaded by: Veterans Caucus Maryland

Position: FAV



MARYLAND GENERAL ASSEMBLY
VETERANS CAUCUS

March 31, 2026

Senator Guy Guzzone, Chair
Budget & Taxation Committee
Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: HB842, Property Tax Credit – Surviving Spouse of Military Service Member
Hearing Date: April 2, 2026

Dear Chairman Guzzone,

Please let this letter serve as notice of the support of the Maryland General Assembly Veterans Caucus for House Bill 842.

After review by our respective legislative committee, the 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 E. Brooks".

Senator Benjamin Brooks
Senate Chair

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mike Rogers".

Delegate Mike Rogers
House Chair

cc: Delegate Mike Griffith

HB0842-BT_MACo_SUP.pdf

Uploaded by: Kevin Kinnally

Position: FWA



House Bill 842

Property Tax Credit – Surviving Spouse of Military Service Member

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**

To: Budget and Taxation Committee

Date: April 2, 2026

From: Kevin Kinnally

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** HB 842. As amended, this bill authorizes county and municipal governments to grant, by local law, a property tax credit for the dwelling of a surviving spouse of a military service member who does not qualify for the existing exemption under Tax–Property § 7–208.

MACo supports providing meaningful relief to eligible residents, and many counties already offer locally adopted property tax relief in addition to existing exemptions. This bill preserves local authority to determine whether to offer a credit and how to structure it based on local fiscal capacity and community priorities.

Property taxes are the primary source of revenue for county governments and support core services such as education, public safety, infrastructure, and public health. By making the credit optional, the bill avoids a mandated reduction in local revenues and allows each jurisdiction to balance tax relief with funding for essential services.

The bill appropriately authorizes counties to set the amount and duration of the credit, establish eligibility requirements, and adopt administrative procedures, allowing each jurisdiction that enacts the credit to tailor it to their community needs. Additionally, it allows counties to decide how much revenue they are willing to forego to provide the desirable benefits enabled by the bill.

For these reasons, MACo urges the Committee to issue a **FAVORABLE** report on HB 842.