

Maryland Military Coalition SB0301 Environment and

Uploaded by: DAVID Dragics

Position: FAV



MARYLAND MILITARY COALITION

Serving Veterans through Legislative Advocacy

March 30, 2026

The Honorable Marc Korman
Chair, Environment and Transportation Committee
250 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Subject: Request for **FAVORABLE Report** – SB0301 – Veterans Discount Act

Dear Chair Korman and distinguished members of the Environment and Transportation Committee:

On behalf of the members of the Maryland Military Coalition¹ (MMC), I write to request a **FAVORABLE report** by the Committee on **SB0301 – Veterans Discount Act**, sponsored by Senator Bryan Simonaire. This bill requires State government entities to adopt regulations that provide for granting a waiver of statutory fees for the respective licenses they issue to veterans who apply for them. The bill enables the governing authority of each entity that issues these licenses to decide whether to waive the statutory fee required, in whole or in part, for that veteran either at the time of application or renewal. **This bill was unanimously passed by the Senate.**

This bill, by enabling various State government entities the option to waive their statutory fees for veterans, is similar to what many national retailers, such as The Home Depot, Target, L. L. Bean, Apple, Nike, and Verizon, and local retailers currently do. If enacted, it will be further recognition by the State of Maryland of those who served in uniform and are veterans as stated in § 9-901 of the State Government Article. The MMC firmly believes they deserve this recognition and benefit.

The Maryland Military Coalition strongly supports SB0301 and asks for a **FAVORABLE** report from the Environment and Transportation Committee.

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

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

Respectfully,

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

¹ See attached list of member organizations.



Member Organizations of the Maryland Military Coalition

Air Force Sergeants Association

American Military Society

American Minority Veterans Research Project

Association of the United States Navy

Commissioned Officers Association of the U.S. Public Health Service

Disabled American Veterans

Fleet Reserve Association of Annapolis

Jewish War Veterans of the U.S.A

Maryland Air National Guard Retirees' Association

National Active and Retired Federal Employees, Maryland Veterans

Maryland Veterans Chamber of Commerce

Military Officers Association of America

Military Order of the Purple Heart

Military Order of the World Wars

Montford Point Marines of America

National Association of Black Veterans

National Active and Retired Federal Employees, Maryland Veterans

Naval Enlisted Reserve Association

NOAA Association of Commissioned Officers

Reserve Organization of America

Society of Military Widows

Veterans of Foreign Wars

SB301 Sec. Rothstein Testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Ed Rothstein

Position: FAV



*Maryland Department of Veterans &
Military Families
Office of the Secretary*

WES MOORE
GOVERNOR
ARUNA MILLER
LT. GOVERNOR
ED ROTHSTEIN
SECRETARY

Ed Rothstein, Secretary of the Maryland Department of Veteran and Military Families

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF Senate Bill 301 - Veterans' Discount Act
Environment and Transportation Committee
April 1, 2026**

Good afternoon Chair Korman, Vice Chair Guyton, and members of the Committee.

For the record, my name is Ed Rothstein, Secretary of the Maryland Department of Veterans and Military Families.

I'm here today in support of Senate Bill 301 — the Veterans' Discounts Act.

This is a straightforward bill. It gives state agencies the option to waive certain fees for veterans, when appropriate.

Even small costs can create barriers when veterans are trying to access services or opportunities.

This bill provides a practical way to reduce those barriers, without mandates, but by giving agencies flexibility.

It also aligns with Maryland's commitment to those who have served and supports our broader effort to improve access for veterans and their families.

In Maryland, we are working every day to build a state where veterans are not just thanked for their service, but supported in meaningful, practical ways.

I respectfully request a favorable report on Senate Bill 301.

SB 301 Senator Simonaire_FAV_ENT.pdf

Uploaded by: Kara Contino

Position: FAV

BRYAN W. SIMONAIRE
Legislative District 31
Anne Arundel County

Education, Energy, and the
Environment Committee

Joint Committee on the Chesapeake and
Atlantic Coastal Bays Critical Area



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The Senate of Maryland
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

SB 301 – The Veterans Discount Act

I am Senator Bryan Simonaire presenting SB 301.

I worked with the *Department of Veterans and Military Families*, *numerous other Departments* and *veteran advocacy groups* on this consensus legislation.

This bill honors our veterans and provides clear enabling authority for Departments and Boards to allow a veteran's discount on fees that are specifically set in statute.

Knowing the fiscal situation, this bill has no fiscal impact as it is enabling and creates no mandates.

However, in addition to providing enabling authority, it provides flexibility to the Departments and Boards and the important framework for easy future implementation.

Over the years, different legislators have passed a few bills authorizing discounts on fees for veterans. As I was researching other areas to provide discounts for veterans, I found there were literally 100s of places in Maryland law where the fees were set in statute.

Therefore, I looked for a more comprehensive way to provide a framework for discounts for our veterans.

Over the summer, I worked with the Attorney General's office to determine if and under what circumstances discounts could currently be applied to fees set specifically in statutes.

The answer was "*it depends*" as illustrated through many different scenarios.

In current law there were some cases, a discount would be allowed but in many other cases it would not be allowed.

The cleanest and most straightforward approach was to create an overall framework to grant this enabling authority throughout law where appropriate.

That is what this bill does by creating a general authorization section which is referenced by any section to grant enabling authority.

By creating this framework structure, it is very easy going forward to add or remove the enabling authority for any veteran's fee discount set in any section.

As you well know, the private sector has embraced this concept of honoring and thanking our veterans with discounts when shopping, going to restaurants and so many other areas.

There are 100s of fees set in statute and this bill took the top fees that would have the greatest impact on helping our veterans.

Generally speaking, the fees had to make sense to apply to veterans and be at least \$50 or more. However, if at a later date, the General Assembly wanted to authorize other fees, the framework would be there for easy inclusion.

Maryland can be a leader in providing a framework and authority to honor our veterans very similar to what the private sector already does.

When working with the Departments, one said, *"I will note additionally that we have run into this predicament before, whereby an emergency or some unforeseen disaster occurred and we sought ways to provide some means of relief but were hampered by statutory language that needed legislative action."*

This is a meaningful bill that provides flexibility to our Departments, shows honor to our veterans and *Makes Maryland More Welcoming to Veterans*.

For all these reasons, I ask for your favorable consideration.

Even if the situation for a fee reduction for a set fee does not fall under the *de minimis* doctrine, it is still possible that the fee reduction is consistent with the General Assembly's intent. In that case, an agency need not have explicit authority to act, however, a department's actions must be "consistent with the letter and spirit of the law under which the agency acts." *Lussier v. Maryland Racing Comm'n*, 343 Md. 681, 686 (1996).

Also, if a State agency has statutory authority to set fees, but must do so through regulation, then altering an already set fee would likely be subject to the provisions under the State's Administrative Procedure Act ("APA"), under Title 10, subtitle 1 of the State Government Article. While there are some instances where an exception applies, that decision is made on a case by case basis. Maryland courts have recognized that in enacting the APA the General Assembly "sought to balance the State's interest in efficient administration against the individual's interest in fairness," and to ensure that "certain basic principles of common sense, justice and fairness" apply "without unduly restricting the agencies in the performance of their various task." *Department of Health and Mental Hygiene v. Chimes*, 343 Md. 336, 338 (1996) (citation omitted). In light of this legislative intent, several decisions have recognized a range of permissible administrative actions that do not trigger the need for rulemaking procedures under the APA. For example, in *Maryland Ass'n of Health Maintenance Orgs. v. Health Services Cost Review Comm'n*, the Court determined that rulemaking was not required prior to the Commission's implementation of an inflation adjustment system to account for changes that occurred after the hospitals' initial rate reviews. 356 Md. 581 (1999). *See also Chimes*, 343 Md. 336 (finding that rulemaking is not required prior to implementation of a "growth cap" for certain costs of health care providers); *Baltimore Gas & Elec. Co. v. Public Service Comm'n*, 305 Md. 145 (1986) (recognizing that rulemaking is not required when agency chose to develop standards through adjudication of particular disputes rather than rulemaking).

Moreover, the Attorney General has observed that the APA procedures ensure "fairness and mature consideration of rules of general application." *75 Opinions of the Attorney General* 37, 43 (1990). In that opinion, the Attorney General advised that an important consideration for whether a directive or a similar statement is exempt from the APA is "the practical consequences for members of the public." *Id.* at 53. "The 'public' are those outside the agency whose situation is changed as a result of the agency's internal management statement." *Id.* at 54; *see also 79 Opinions of the Attorney General* 354, 360 (1994) ("The APA is intended to ensure the affected members of the public will have a chance to comment. . .").

In addition, if an agency is acting as a market participant when setting a fee, the agency action may be excluded from the APA rulemaking procedures. For example, APA rulemaking requirements did not apply when the Maryland Port Administration set charges for use of its marine terminals because "the setting of prices and related terms by a government agency for the goods or services that it makes available as a market participant" was not a "rule." *68 Opinions of the Attorney General* 9, 11 (1983). The reasoning here is that the agency is acting for the purpose of revenue-raising rather than regulation and it was not performing functions "peculiarly or uniquely

The Honorable Bryan W. Simonaire
July 11, 2025
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governmental,” but instead setting charges “normally encountered in the outside world.” *Id.* at 12-13, 16. Additionally, it would be unreasonable to require an agency to go through cumbersome APA procedures every time it adjusted prices in a competitive marketplace. *Id.* at 14.

Considering the above, an agency’s ability to alter set fees depends upon what is warranted under the statute that governs a specific agency. Even if not expressly warranted in statute, in some cases, exceptions may be permitted for altering fees, depending upon the effect and nature of the agency’s action.

I hope this response is helpful. Please let me know if you have any further questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Shaunee L. Harrison".

Shaunee L. Harrison
Assistant Attorney General



SB0301 Larry Zarzecki AARP FAV

Uploaded by: Larry Zarzecki

Position: FAV



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SB 301 – Veterans' Discounts Act
Environment and Transportation Committee
April 1, 2026
FAVORABLE

Good afternoon, Chair Korman, Vice Chair Guyton, and members of the Environment and Transportation Committee. My name is Larry Zarzecki, and I am a volunteer with AARP Maryland.

AARP Maryland represents more than 850,000 members statewide and is the largest nonprofit, nonpartisan organization advocating for Marylanders age 50 and over and their families. We thank Senator Simonaire and the many co-sponsors of this legislation.

AARP has four areas of focus in serving military families, including fighting fraud, helping with career and employment opportunities through the Military Service Job Center, caregiving, and access to benefits.

What does SB 301 do?

This bill authorizes Maryland's state agencies, licensing boards, and regulatory departments to waive or reduce statutory fees for veterans. Importantly, the bill does not mandate fee waivers, but permits agencies to offer them after adopting regulations that establish standards, eligibility, and processes.

This bill reduces barriers for veterans seeking to enter the workforce by obtaining occupational licenses, renewing certifications, registering small businesses, or pursuing trades, security work, or home improvement contracting.

SB 301 supports veteran employment by authorizing agencies to lighten these financial burdens. SB 301 importantly does not require agencies to waive fees but enables relief when administratively doable. This balanced approach ensures fiscal responsibility while expanding support for veterans.

For these reasons, we recommend a favorable report for SB 301.

If you have any questions, please contact Sara Westrick, AARP Maryland Advocacy Director, at swestrick@aarp.org or by calling 410-310-0374.

DVMF SB301 Support.pdf

Uploaded by: Morgan Murphy

Position: FAV



**Maryland Department of Veterans and Military Families
Office of the Secretary**

WES MOORE
GOVERNOR
ARUNA MILLER
LT. GOVERNOR
ED ROTHSTEIN
SECRETARY

**Senate Bill 301 - Veterans' Discounts Act
SUPPORT**

April 1, 2026

The Honorable Marc Korman
Environment and Transportation Committee
250 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Chair Korman, Vice Chair Guyton, and Committee Members,

The Maryland Department of Veterans and Military Families (DVMF) is committed to leading veterans and their families through life's transitions, making Maryland the best state for military-connected communities. Our department supports Senate Bill 301 - Veterans' Discounts Act.

SB 301 simply allows state agency secretaries, boards, and commissions to waive certain fees for veterans, should they choose to. This legislation acknowledges the sacrifices of those who served and is a tangible way to honor their contributions and demonstrate Maryland's commitment to its veterans.

Maryland has a proud tradition of supporting its veterans, and Senate Bill 301 aligns with our State's values and commitment to those who have served. By reducing financial barriers, this bill will have a profound and positive impact on the lives of our veterans and their families. Together, we can continue to build a Maryland where all veterans receive the respect, support, and opportunities they deserve.

Thank you for your consideration, and I respectfully ask the committee for a favorable report.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Edward C. Rothstein". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Ed Rothstein
Secretary