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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
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SB 242 – SCRA Modernization

I am Senator Bryan Simonaire presenting SB 242.

Let me say after a lot of work, collaboration and communication, this SCRA Modernization legislation is consensus legislation.

This was a massive comprehensive effort, and I want to thank all involved, especially the DLS drafting team.

In fact, this effort started drafting way back in June as DLS chose this bill to help train new drafters!

I worked with so many, including the:

- Department of *Veterans and Military Families*
- Department of *Health and all their Boards*
- Department of *Labor*
- Department of *Environment*
- Department of *Agriculture*
- Department of *Transportation*
- Department of *Natural Resources*
- Department of *Education*
- Department of *Public Safety and Correctional Services*
- *The Maryland Insurance Administration*
- The Maryland Bar Association
- The Public Service Commission
- The Maryland Association of Realtors
- Accountability and Implementation Board, and
- Numerous Military Advocacy groups

Out of respect to the committee's time, I asked most to provide written testimony.

The federal *Servicemembers Civil Relief Act*, known as SCRA, is designed to ease financial and legal burdens on active-duty members during deployment.

There have been significant revisions over the years, such as:

- **1940 (SSCRA):** Congress passed the original SSCRA to protect soldiers, sailors, and Marines from financial hardship during active duty.
- **2003 (SCRA):** The SCRA completely revised the 1940 Act to provide modern legal protection for deployed Reservists and National Guard members.
- **2009 - The Military Spouses Residency Relief Act** helped spouses maintain their home state residency for tax purposes.
- **2010:** The *Helping Heroes Keep Their Homes Act* extended mortgage protection periods.
- **2022:** Amendments under the *Veterans Auto and Education Improvement Act* of 2022 further updated the protections.

Which brings us back to this SB 242 that updates Maryland law to be compliant with the 2023 and 2024 SCRA federal revisions.

In January 2023, the federal SCRA was significantly updated for all states to incorporate changes regarding the portability of occupational licenses for active service members and their spouses.

There were additional changes made in 2024 and signed into law by President Biden.

However, three years later, Maryland law has not been updated with these important revisions; therefore, this bill primarily revises Maryland law to be compliant with the latest SCRA revisions.

Practically speaking, these changes will be transformative for service members and their spouses when moving into our state.

This bill does 4 main things:

1. Primarily it revises our Maryland laws so they are compliant with federal SCRA requirements found in 50 USC §4025a. Service members and their spouses transferred on military orders will be able to use their home state occupational license and no longer be required to obtain a Maryland license if they meet certain requirements. They will now go through a registration process that ensures they are able to practice in our state. This will be tremendously helpful for service members and their spouses to start working in our state. There is a set of requirements that must be met, such as, having a valid license in their home state, be in good standing, proof they are in the Uniformed Services on military orders, they will comply with Maryland's licensing requirements and scope of practice, etc.
2. Additionally, the Maryland expedited licensing process will be used for service members and their spouses if they want to practice in Maryland and obtain a license in an area that they currently don't hold a license.

Example: Transfer to Maryland and have a Massage license, but they are training to be a nurse. While in Maryland they finish their education and want to practice in Maryland. Since they didn't have a license already, they don't qualify under the SCRA process, but can still get an expedited process for a Maryland license.
3. This bill expands helping our veterans and spouses get expedited licenses in health, education and financial areas to match what was done in the Business Regulations in 2019. *[Died or discharged window of 1 year removed]*
4. Finally, it updates old Federal references to SCRA in the *Public Safety and Real Property* Articles.

Background Info: The SCRA reference location in federal law has changed. The change was simply moving the language from the Appendix of Title 50 to be in

the Code itself within Title 50. SCRA is now contained in 50 USCA 3901 through 4043.

I could go into much greater detail, but the bottom line – this will get Maryland into Compliance with Federal law.

This is very important for several reasons, but one is that other states have been sued on behalf of our service members by the Department of Justice for not complying. Additionally, this is a major improvement for the quality of life for our service members and their spouses.

This bill takes great strides in making Maryland an even better place for our Uniformed Services members and their families.

I offer one amendment to have the Maryland Supreme Court be the one who authorizes the practice of Law in Maryland for these SCRA individuals, and regulate through their Rules.

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