



MARYLAND COMMISSION ON VETERANS AND MILITARY FAMILIES

Strategic Plan

Making Maryland the best state for veterans and military families

December 2024

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Section I Introduction

Executive Summary

In 2024, pursuant to Chapter 10 of the Annotated Code of Maryland, the Maryland Commission on Veterans and Military Families (CVMF) was established to develop and implement a strategic plan aimed at making Maryland the premier state for veterans and military families. The Commission's mandate included the formulation of legislative and budgetary recommendations, in consultation with relevant state agencies, to improve the quality of life for Maryland's approximately 350,000 veterans, 50,000 active-duty service members, and their families. The Act remains in effect for a period of one year and one month and ends June 30, 2025.

Through a series of meetings, data analysis, and collaboration with stakeholders, the CVMF identified key focus areas:

1. **Integrated Military-Civilian Communities:** To create an integrated and trusted civilian community in Maryland that empowers veterans and military families to thrive.
2. **Sustainable Employment Opportunities:** To ensure Maryland has economic policies, incentives, and sustainable employment opportunities for transitioning service members, veterans, and military families.
3. **Comprehensive Higher Education Opportunities:** To guarantee affordable higher education and training opportunities exist to support transition to civilian life, career progression for veterans and military families, and National Guard recruitment.
4. **Pathways to Stability:** To form meaningful pathways in Maryland to access emergency relief for veterans and military families experiencing food and housing insecurity.

Key Recommendations

- Enhance state-level data collection and sharing to address gaps in services and policies.
- Establish initiatives like homebuyer programs for veterans and streamline employment licensing portability for military spouses.
- Increase the number of Purple Star Schools in Maryland and awareness of education and disability resources for military families with children.
- Streamline scholarship programs and increase tuition support for National Guard members and veterans.
- Host annual community summits and develop resources such as a "Maryland-You're Welcome Here" guide for transitioning military families.

This strategic plan emphasizes collaboration, innovation, and targeted investments to address the unique needs of Maryland's military community. By integrating efforts across sectors and prioritizing impactful programs, Maryland will position itself as a national leader in supporting veterans, service members, and their families, ensuring their long-term well-being and contributions to the state.

Methodology

The Maryland Commission on Veterans and Military Families (CVMF) employed a structured and collaborative approach to develop its strategic plan. Beginning July 12, 2024, the Commission convened monthly, with the first meeting held in Annapolis. This inaugural session included a comprehensive review of available data on veterans and military families sourced from the Department of Defense, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Purdue University's *Measuring Communities* initiative, and Blue Star Families. Recognizing the scarcity of state-specific data on military-connected communities, CVMF relied heavily on national trends and survey outcomes to inform its analysis. The first meeting also included a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis of Maryland's existing veteran and military family ecosystem.

To ensure targeted and effective outcomes, Commissioners volunteered to join one or more workgroups during the initial meeting. These workgroups were aligned with the five pillars of the Maryland Joins Forces initiative: employment, education, health and wellness, food and housing insecurity, and service and volunteerism. Each workgroup convened monthly to develop actionable goals, refine key performance indicators (KPIs), and propose strategic initiatives related to their respective pillars.

In subsequent meetings, workgroups presented their draft proposals for group discussion and feedback. The Commission collectively refined these proposals by integrating insights from existing research and best practices both from within Maryland and other states. This iterative process ensured that the final report was data-driven, comprehensive, and aligned with the needs of Maryland's veterans and military families.

Acknowledgements

Commission Membership

Antonio Campbell, Commissioner
Maryland National Guard (backup)

John Astle, Commissioner
Senate President Appointment

Craig Hunter, Commissioner
Maryland National Guard, Adjutant General's
Designee

KT Tyler, Commissioner
Chair, Maryland Veterans Commission

Dana Burl, Chair
Deputy Secretary, DVMF, Secretary's Designee

Nick Allen, Delegate, Commissioner
House Speaker Appointment

Dawn Gile, Senator, Commissioner
Senate President Appointment

Robert Flanagan, Commissioner
House Speaker Appointment

Dena Allen-Few, Commissioner
College Collaboration on Student Veterans
Commission, Designee

Robert McCullough, Commissioner
Reserves Component Representative

Frank Goertner, Commissioner
Workforce Development Representative

Rosemary Williams, Commissioner
Senate President Appointment

Ginger Miller, Commissioner
Women Veterans Organization Representative

Steven Clagett, Jr., Commissioner
Maryland Veterans Home Commission, Designee

Grace Caulfied, Commissioner
Mental Health Care Representative

Toni Gianforti, Staff
Department of Veterans and Military Families

Jayson Spiegel, Commissioner
House Speaker Appointment

Yolanda Rayford, Commissioner
Military Spouse Representative

Presentations

Lisa Swoboda & Dean Ertwine

Maryland Department of
Commerce, Office of Federal
and Military Affairs

Topic: Maryland Military
Installation Council and Data

Mary Gable & Dr. Kaitlin Quigley

Maryland State Department of
Education

Topic: Purple Star Schools and
Military Interstate Compact

Section II Strategic Plan

Focus areas overview:

1. Integrated military civilian communities
2. Sustainable employment opportunities
3. Comprehensive higher education possibilities
4. Meaningful pathways to stability

Strategic objectives defined:

1 INTEGRATED MILITARY-CIVILIAN COMMUNITIES: To create an integrated and trusted civilian community in Maryland that empowers veterans and military families to thrive.

2 SUSTAINABLE EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES: To ensure Maryland has economic policies, incentives, and sustainable employment opportunities for transitioning service members, veterans, and military families.

3 COMPREHENSIVE HIGHER EDUCATION POSSIBILITIES: To guarantee affordable higher education and training opportunities exist to support transition to civilian life, career progression for veterans and military families, and National Guard recruitment.

4 MEANINGFUL PATHWAYS TO STABILITY: To form meaningful pathways in Maryland to access emergency relief for veterans and military families experiencing food and housing insecurity.

Focus Area 1: INTEGRATED MILITARY-CIVILIAN COMMUNITIES

Current State

Veterans, military families, and caregivers face a number of financial, health, and emotional burdens. Lack of social connectedness and belonging in their communities only serve to complicate and exacerbate these challenges.

Civilians may not fully understand the unique challenges veterans face when transitioning from military service back to civilian life. Some struggle to relate to people who lack an understanding of military experiences, often without realizing they don't understand. It can be difficult reconnecting with family members and re-establishing roles within the family. Some veterans experience challenges building or joining a community, as the support structures provided by the military are no longer available after separation. Veterans and their families often need to independently seek or create social connections and a sense of belonging.

Military families are viewed more favorably than other American institutions, including the military itself. Despite high regard, few Americans feel the public is aware of military families' challenges. Although the majority agrees the country has a responsibility to support them, only less than half report helping a military family or service member in the past year. This reflects strong support and recognition of the contributions of military families but also highlights a gap in active public support.

More than 50% of military connected children under 18 attend public school. In a recent military teen survey, 35% reported low mental well-being, 12% reported preparing to end their lives at some point, and nearly half (45%) reported self-harming at least once, with 31% repeating the behavior within six months. This rate far exceeds civilian comparisons. Low well-being and self-harm rates were linked to parental injuries, food insecurity, and the number of parental deployments and underscore the need for targeted support programs to address the needs of military youth.

There are approximately 14.3 million military/veteran caregivers in the U.S., representing 5.5% of the adult population. Mental health concerns are prevalent among caregivers, especially those caring for veterans under 60. They experience high rates of depression and suicidal thoughts. Physical health concerns are also significant, with many caregivers experiencing high levels of stress, depression, and burnout. Children in caregiving households often take on caregiving duties and experience challenges in school attendance and mental health. There is low participation in support programs, with almost half of caregivers not utilizing available resources like respite care, support groups, or structured wellness programs.

Strategic Objective

To create an integrated and trusted civilian community in Maryland that empowers veterans and military families to thrive.

Action Items

1.1 DVMF to hold annual summits for Maryland Joins Forces partners to strategize partnership opportunities, collaborate on veteran and military family related events, and identify potential new partners to join the initiative (Budgetary recommendation)

1.2 DVMF to convene a work group to identify what veteran and military family quality of life data is currently being tracked across state agencies and make recommendations for data sharing (Legislative recommendation)

1.3 Collaborate across government to create a Maryland based Purple Star Schools application playbook

1.4 DVMF to convene a work group to create and distribute a “Maryland-You’re Welcome Here” guide for military families moving to Maryland

1.5 Modernize the DVMF website with a one stop shop for resource information and increase outreach to raise awareness of the site to service members, veterans, and families

1.6 Launch a DVMF military transition initiative for transitioning service members and military spouses similar to the Onward Ops ETS Sponsorship Program to provide mentorship and improve the transition experience

1.7 Compile a directory of known service/volunteer organizations, and leverage “Maryland Serves” and Maryland Joins Forces to raise awareness of opportunities to engage civilians, veterans, and military families

Key Performance Indicators

Number of Maryland Joins Forces partner agreements

Number of state agencies with DVMF data sharing agreements

Number of Purple Star Designated schools in Maryland

Number of Maryland-You’re Welcome Here guides distributed

Number of DVMF website visitors

Number of transitioning service members moving to Maryland

Number of identified service/volunteer opportunities available to bring together civilians and the military connected community

Number of veterans, military families, and civilians participating in identified service/volunteer opportunities

Participant feedback on belonging and integration following service/volunteer opportunities

2 SUSTAINABLE EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Current State

While the unemployment rate for veterans in Maryland remains low (2.1%), the employment landscape for veterans remains a mix of progress and persistent barriers. While awareness and resources have improved, systemic issues like skill mismatches, stereotypes, and cultural gaps continue to limit the full potential of veteran employment outcomes. Addressing these

challenges requires sustained commitment from employers and policymakers to ensure veterans can leverage their unique strengths in the civilian workforce.

Many veterans find their military-acquired skills, such as technical and combat-related expertise, are not readily transferable to civilian roles. Gaps in resumes and perceived lack of relevant civilian experience often lead to veterans being underemployed or offered entry-level positions despite their expertise. Conditions like post traumatic stress affect job performance and employability, with veterans facing stereotypes that can hinder hiring and career growth. This creates a cycle of unemployment and deteriorating mental health.

The military emphasizes discipline, teamwork, and duty, but these traits may not align with the autonomy expected in civilian roles. Veterans often report frustration with civilian work environments, where values like trust and duty may not be as prioritized as in the military.

Since 2015 the unemployment rate for military spouses has remained unchanged at 21%, although more than 60% have an associates degree or higher. Frequent moves from one duty station to another significantly increases unemployment odds. Many spouses face challenges in maintaining consistent employment due to frequent relocations. Child care responsibilities, particularly for children not in daycare or school, are a primary reason for not working. In addition, licensing or certification requirements after PCS moves also present significant challenges.

Efforts to improve military spouse employment include addressing PCS-related challenges, increasing access to flexible jobs, and supporting career continuity through portable certifications and remote work opportunities.

Objective

To ensure Maryland has meaningful economic policies, incentives, and sustainable employment opportunities for transitioning service members, veterans, and military families.

Action Items

2.1 Create a state-level veteran and military spouses dashboard to inform employment related policy recommendations (ie unemployment rates, retiree and veteran salary/income data, number of veteran owned businesses, occupational licenses ported to Maryland from other states, etc)

2.2 Require an annual report be submitted to DVMF on the number of expedited occupational licenses issued to veterans and uniformed services spouses and the length of time it takes to issue licenses to ensure compliance with existing federal and state laws on license portability, reciprocity, and recognition (Legislative recommendation)

2.3 Designate an ombudsman within DVMF to provide employment information and other referral services to transitioning veterans and their families, to host roundtable meetings and events to highlight the value veterans bring to organizations, and encourage private sector

businesses to report service disabled veteran owned small business contracting information to the Governor's Office of Small, Minority, and Women Business Affairs VSBE Program

2.5 Create a listserv for veterans and military spouses to receive advance notice of job opportunities in the Maryland Workforce Exchange

Key Performance Indicators

Number of veterans and military spouses hired into state government

Rate of retention for veterans and military spouses in state government

Rate of veteran and military spouse unemployment

Number of licenses ported and recognized by state credentialing boards

Number of private sector businesses participating in veteran hiring preference

Number and length of time it takes for state credentialing boards to issue licenses to veterans and military spouses

Annual salaries for veterans and military spouses

3 COMPREHENSIVE HIGHER EDUCATION POSSIBILITIES

Current State

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has made significant investments in higher education programs for veterans, complemented by Maryland State Government initiatives to support military families through educational reimbursements and local school support. States such as Texas, New York, and Pennsylvania have implemented robust programs offering a wide range of educational and certification benefits, setting a high benchmark for Maryland to follow.

In Maryland, the National Guard State Tuition Assistance Reimbursement (STAR) Program currently reimburses Guard members for up to 50% of tuition and related fees at state-supported colleges, universities, and certain private institutions and trade schools. However, this reimbursement percentage is lower compared to neighboring states offering more comprehensive benefits.

Eligibility for Maryland's scholarship programs includes the surviving dependents of service members who died in service or sustained a 100% permanent service-connected disability, veterans with a 25% or greater service-connected disability who have exhausted federal benefits, and POW/MIA families from the Vietnam conflict who resided in Maryland at the time of the service member's designation. Applicants must provide detailed documentation, including discharge papers (commonly referred to as the DD214) and evidence of disability ratings, to qualify. However, the process can be complex and burdensome, potentially deterring applicants.

The benefits available through Maryland's STAR program and Conroy Scholarship lag behind those of states like Pennsylvania, where service members can assign their tuition benefits to dependents, allowing more flexibility in education planning. Additionally, other states, such as

Delaware, have transitioned from reimbursement models to direct tuition waivers, significantly reducing the financial barriers for service members and their families.

By addressing these gaps and adopting best practices from other states, Maryland can improve its support for veterans and military families, enabling better access to higher education and aligning with its goal of becoming a leader in veteran-focused initiatives.

Objective

To guarantee affordable higher education and training opportunities exist to support transition to civilian life, career progression for veterans and military families, and National Guard recruitment.

Action Items

3.1 Enhance the Conroy Scholarship by simplifying eligibility criteria by allowing the Chapter 35 Certificate of Eligibility and implementing a sliding scale benefit similar to the Post-9/11 GI Bill to cover tuition and fees based on the veteran's service and disability status (Legislative recommendation)

3.2 Expand STAR Program Benefits by increasing tuition reimbursement from 50% to 100% and transition to a direct tuition waiver model, ensuring funds are provided directly to institutions

3.3 Establish a Maryland "DVMF GI Bill" modeled on successful programs in California, Texas, and New York to provide a 100% tuition waiver for a single degree, contingent on residency and a commitment to work in Maryland (Budgetary recommendation)

3.4 Establish a commission to assess and write an annual report on impact, expenditures, and utilization of existing secondary and higher education scholarships, and to recommend new or expansion of scholarship programs for veterans, National Guard, and military families in Maryland (Legislative recommendation)

3.5 Implement a state grant program to establish Centers of Excellence for Military and Veteran Families on higher education campuses that provide specialized academic advising, career counseling, and mental health resources (Budgetary recommendation)

Key Performance Indicators

Rate of utilization of existing higher education scholarships for veterans and military families in Maryland

Number of Centers of Excellence for Military and Veteran Families on higher education campuses

Utilization of state tuition reimbursement by Maryland National Guard personnel

Degree completion rates among military-affiliated students

4 MEANINGFUL PATHWAYS TO STABILITY

Current State

Food and housing insecurity among military families is a complex issue intertwined with financial, cultural, and systemic challenges. Veterans and military families in Maryland are not immune to financial difficulties, with significant numbers facing food insecurity and unstable housing situations. Existing resources like SNAP benefits, the Maryland Veterans Trust Fund, and US Department of Veterans Affairs homeless services are often underutilized or families are unaware they exist.

According to the Department of Defense, 25% of active duty spouses report their families are food insecure. Of those families, 27% have children under six years of age and 41% of spouses in these food insecure households are unemployed.

Military pay, including the Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH), is insufficient for many families, especially when considering geographic cost-of-living differences. Social and career stigma prevents many from seeking help through programs like SNAP or the Family Subsistence Supplemental Allowance (FSSA).

Spousal unemployment, costs associated with Permanent Change of Station (PCS) moves, and financial mismanagement contribute to food insecurity. Service members and their families often rely on emergency savings, family borrowing, or secondary jobs to make ends meet.

Objective

To form meaningful pathways in Maryland to access emergency relief for veterans and military families experiencing food and housing insecurity.

Action Items

4.1 Conduct a comprehensive state level needs assessment on food and housing insecurity experienced by veterans and military families in Maryland to include review of existing research, social programs, and unmet needs, as well as to make recommendations for addressing identified gaps

4.2 Conduct an outreach initiative to identify veterans and military families receiving SNAP benefits and provide targeted outreach to hotspot areas on the Veterans Trust Fund and the availability of additional assistance

4.3 Elevate awareness of Homegrown by Heroes and other relevant Maryland nonprofits and partner with veteran owned farms to provide food assistance to military families experiencing food insecurity

4.4 Remove BAH and VA disability compensation as a source of income on SNAP and housing assistance applications (Legislative recommendation)

4.5 Establish a first time home buyer initiative program for veterans and military families living in Maryland (Budgetary recommendation)

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Number of veterans and military families in Maryland with food insecurity

Number of homeless veterans in Maryland

Number of emergency and transitional housing programs

Number of partners supporting veterans and military families with food insecurity

Number of veterans and military connected families receiving SNAP benefits

Conclusion

In conclusion, Maryland is poised to lead the nation in supporting veterans, service members, and military families by fostering a comprehensive, inclusive, and innovative approach across four key focus areas. Through the development of integrated military-civilian communities, Maryland will strengthen social connectedness, belonging, and mutual understanding, empowering military-connected families to thrive alongside their civilian neighbors. By ensuring sustainable employment opportunities, the state can help veterans and military spouses overcome systemic barriers to meaningful work, promoting economic stability and growth.

Comprehensive higher education possibilities will enhance access to affordable, high-quality education and training, equipping veterans and their families for success in civilian life while also bolstering National Guard recruitment. Finally, by creating meaningful pathways to stability, Maryland will address critical challenges such as food and housing insecurity, providing veterans and military families with the resources and support necessary for long-term resilience.

With a strategic commitment to these objectives, Maryland can become a model of excellence in veteran and military family support, translating its recognition of their sacrifices into actionable programs that ensure their well-being and prosperity. These initiatives reflect Maryland's dedication to building a future where veterans and military families are celebrated, supported, and empowered to thrive.

Appendices

Appendix I. 2024 Strategic Plan Framework

This strategic framework outlines a comprehensive approach to enhancing the quality of life for veterans, military families, and caregivers in Maryland, ensuring their successful transition and integration into civilian life. The four focus areas—Integrated Military-Civilian Communities, Sustainable Employment Opportunities, Comprehensive Higher Education Possibilities, and Meaningful Pathways to Stability—aim to address systemic challenges while leveraging Maryland’s commitment to supporting those who serve.

Focus Area 1: Integrated Military-Civilian Communities

Objective: To create an integrated and trusted civilian community in Maryland that empowers veterans and military families to thrive.

Key issues include social isolation, a lack of community belonging, and limited understanding of military challenges among civilians. Action items target community integration through annual summits, data-sharing initiatives, educational outreach via Purple Star Schools, and modernization of resources. Initiatives like the "Maryland-You're Welcome Here" guide and mentorship programs for transitioning service members are central to building robust connections.

Highlighted Key Performance Indicators:

- Number of partnerships and collaborative events.
 - Distribution of resources, such as guides and volunteer directories.
 - Participant feedback on community belonging.
-

Focus Area 2: Sustainable Employment Opportunities

Objective: To ensure Maryland has economic policies, incentives, and sustainable employment opportunities for transitioning service members, veterans, and military families.

Persistent challenges include skill mismatches, employment barriers for military spouses, and underutilization of veteran strengths. Initiatives focus on improving licensing portability, promoting veteran hiring in state and private sectors, and offering direct employment resources through dashboards and ombudsman services.

Highlighted Key Performance Indicators:

- Employment and retention rates of veterans and spouses in state government.
- Portability and recognition of occupational licenses.
- Annual salary growth and job satisfaction.

Focus Area 3: Comprehensive Higher Education Possibilities

Objective: To guarantee affordable higher education and training opportunities exist to support transition to civilian life, career progression for veterans and military families, and National Guard recruitment.

Maryland lags behind other states in offering competitive educational benefits. Proposals include expanding the STAR Program to 100% tuition reimbursement, transitioning to direct waivers, and establishing a Maryland "DVMF GI Bill." Centers of Excellence for Military and Veteran Families will provide tailored resources on campuses.

Highlighted Key Performance Indicators:

- Utilization rates of scholarships and tuition programs.
- Number of Centers of Excellence established.
- Degree completion rates among military-affiliated students.

Focus Area 4: Meaningful Pathways to Stability

Objective: To form meaningful pathways in Maryland to access emergency relief for veterans and military families experiencing food and housing insecurity.

Military families often face food insecurity, unstable housing, and financial challenges exacerbated by insufficient pay and spousal unemployment. Initiatives include comprehensive state surveys, enhanced outreach for assistance programs, and innovative partnerships with veteran-owned farms. Removing financial barriers such as counting VA disability compensation toward income limits for SNAP benefits is a priority.

Highlighted Key Performance Indicators:

- Reduction in food insecurity and homelessness rates.
 - Increased participation in assistance programs.
 - Expansion of transitional and permanent housing options.
-

Appendix II.

STATE COMPARISONS: Quality of Life Indicators							
INDICATORS	MD	VA	WVA	PA	SC	NC	FL
Veteran % of the adult population*	6.8% (348,459)	9.2% (684,043)	7.8% (125,314)	6.2% (697,655)	8.4% (386,240)	7.5% (680,709)	7.4% (1,432,721)
VA outpatient care clinics**	16	28	17	49	18	37	86
Veterans age 65 and over**	41.6%	37.7%	49.3%	51.7%	45.1%	43.2%	50.2%
Women veterans**	15%	15.8%	8.6%	9.1%	12.6%	13.3%	11.7%
Veterans receiving disability compensation**	107,221	243,174	39,849	151,108	137,598	253,167	472,784
Education beneficiaries**	20,773	46,150	20,537	16,737	14,479	29,377	56,390
VA healthcare system enrollees**	157,164	310,312	71,001	319,155	205,341	363,291	765,704
Veteran labor force participation rate***	54.8%	60.8%	44.7%	43.1%	45.8%	46.8%	43.6%
Veteran percent of the labor force unemployed***	2%	3.7%	2.2%	2%	3.4%	1.7%	2.5%
Veterans experiencing homelessness* ***	545	386	91	826	393	777	2,558
Veteran households on SNAP benefits +	19,972	28,303	10,232	55,731	19,082	40,540	89,297
Median home prices ++	\$410,000	\$413,000	\$285,000	\$276,000	\$371,000	\$363,000	\$402,000
State individual income tax brackets +++	5.75%	5.75%	6.5%	3.07%	6.5%	4.75%	None
Sales tax ++++	6%	5.77%	6.57%	6.24%	7.5%	7%	7%
Property tax structure rankings \$	#42	#29	#10	#16	#35	#13	#12

- * USAFacts. (2022). *US Veterans Statistics and Data Trends*. Retrieved from <https://usafacts.org>
- ** Department of Veterans Affairs. (2023). *NCVAS State Summary Landing Page*. Department of Veterans Affairs Open Data Portal. Retrieved from <https://data.va.gov>
- *** Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2023). *Table 6A. Employment status of veterans 18 years and over by state, 2023 annual averages - 2023 A01 Results*. Retrieved from <https://www.bls.gov>
- **** U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. (2023). *2023 AHAR: Part 1 - PIT Estimates of Homelessness in the U.S.* HUD USER. Retrieved from <https://www.huduser.gov>
- + Measuring Communities. (2022). *Topics*. Retrieved from <https://measuringcommunities.org>
- ++ Forbes Advisor. (2024). *Median Home Price By State 2024*. Retrieved from <https://www.forbes.com/advisor>
- +++ Tax Foundation. (2023). *2023 State Income Tax Rates and Brackets*. Retrieved from <https://taxfoundation.org>
- ++++ Tax Foundation. (2024). *2024 Sales Tax Rates: State & Local Sales Tax by State*. Retrieved from <https://taxfoundation.org>
- \$ Tax Foundation. (2024). *Ranking Property Taxes by State | Property Tax Ranking*. Retrieved from <https://taxfoundation.org>

Appendix III: Benefits Comparison Chart

Benefits Comparison Chart							
Issue	MD	VA	WVA	PA	SC	NC	FL
Retirement Pay State Income Tax Exemption *	\$12,500 exempt under age 55: \$20,000 exempt age 55 and older	First \$30k exempt in 2024; increases to \$40k in 2025	Full Exemption	Full Exemption	Full Exemption	Full Exemption	Full Exemption
SBP Income Tax Exemption **	\$12,500 exempt under age 55: \$20,000 exemptage 55 and older	First \$30k exempt in 2024; increases to \$40k in 2025	Full Exemption	Full Exemption	Full Exemption	Full Exemption	Full Exemption
Disabled Vets Property Tax Exemption	100% for service connected disabled taxpayers	100% for service connected disabled taxpayers	None	Partial or full tax credit for service disabled taxpayers depending on income	Full exemption available depending on service connected disability	Excludes up to \$45,000 of appraised value of 100% service-con nected disability; no income requiremen ts.	\$5,000 reduction for 10% disability rating; reduction up to \$445,000 if 100% disability
Access to Quality Childcare (DSLO) ***	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	No
Spouse Employment License Portability (DSLO) ****	Introduced; but not passed	Yes	Yes	Yes	Introduced; but not passed	Introduced; but not passed	Yes
Licensing Compacts Passed*****	25%-49% of compacts passed	50%-74% of compacts passed	50%-74% of compacts passed	25%-49% of compacts passed	25%-49% of compacts passed	25%-49% of compacts passed	25%-49% of compacts passed
Military Spouse Accessibility +	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Requiring states to report off-post military child abuse to DoD (DSLO) ++	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Concurrent Juvenile Jurisdiction (DSLO)	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	No
State for Military Families with Special Education Needs (DSLO) +++	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	No
Military Families Open Enrollment Flexibility (DSLO) ++++	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes
Military Family Antidiscrimination (DSLO) +++++							
Education	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	Yes
Employment	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	No
Housing	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	Yes
Public Accommodation	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	No
National Guard State University Tuition Reimbursement	50% tuition paid at state universities	\$7000 per year toward a degree or certification	100% of tuition and up to \$9k in fees	100% of tuition & technology fee	100% of tuition up to \$22K max	100% of tuition	100% of tuition
National Guard State Tuition Reimbursement for Military Families	None	None	None	SM may assign benefit 100% of tuition and technology fee benefit to dependent	None	None	None
Tuition Reimbursement for Veterans and Families	Conroy and VAIC Scholarships	Tuition waiver for spouses dependents of SM KIA or disabled	Up to \$500 per semester	Grants based on financial situation	Dependent children of veterans may receive a tuition waiver if certain criteria met, including award of PH	Vietnam veteran, spouse or descendent of a veteran may receive \$2,000 annually toward	100% waiver for veterans awarded a PH or BSM with V device

						education expenses	
State Employee Paid Leave for Military Training	30 Days	15 Days	30 Days	15 Days	15 Days. An additional 30 days if deployed to a combat zone. Can use up to 45 days annual leave and 90 days sick leave if activated.	30 Days	30 Days
State Employee Pay Differential for Military Duty	Yes	State pays difference between state salary and military pay if military pay is less than half state salary	No	Guard and Reserve state employees can bank more leave than ordinarily allowed to be used when ordered to active duty	No	30 days of leave followed by pay differential while activated	No
State Employment Veterans Preference	Yes	Yes, includes NG who have not served on active duty	Yes	Yes, includes NG and Reserve who have not served on active duty	Yes	Yes, includes National Guard who have not served on active duty	Yes
State Employment Preference for Active Duty Spouses	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	No
Priority job placement for veterans and spouses	No	No	Early access to job postings	No	Veterans receive access to job postings before the public	Veterans receive access to job postings before the public	No
Credit for Military Service Added to State Pension	Yes	No	No	No	No	Yes	No

*/** Military Officers Association of America (MOAA). (n.d.). *State Report Card*. Retrieved from

<https://www.moaa.org/content/state-report-card/statereportcard/>

*** Military OneSource. (n.d.). *Military access to quality family child care: Status tracker*. Retrieved from

<https://statepolicy.militaryonesource.mil/status-tracker/military-access-to-quality-family-child-care>

****/***** Military OneSource. (n.d.). *Military spouse employment and economic opportunities: Portability*. Retrieved from

<https://statepolicy.militaryonesource.mil/status-tracker/military-spouse-employment-and-economic-opportunities-portability>

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Appendix IV: Meeting Information

Date	Objectives	Presenters	Location
July 11, 2024	<p>Introductions: Facilitate introductions and understand members' roles, experiences, and motivations.</p> <p>Commission Overview: Review expectations, legislative priorities, and data on Maryland veterans and military families.</p> <p>SWOT Analysis: Assess strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to inform goal development.</p> <p>Goal Setting: Identify key service gaps and establish visionary goals to enhance support for veterans and military families.</p> <p>Team Organization: Form work groups to address identified priorities.</p> <p>Next Steps: Summarize outcomes and prepare for the August meeting</p>	Dana Burl; Maryland Department of Veterans and Military Families	Annapolis
August 8, 2024	<p>Maryland Department of Commerce Briefing: Gain insights into the Maryland Department of Commerce/Office of Military and Legislative Affairs and the Maryland Military Installation Council.</p> <p>Goals Discussion: Review and refine identified gaps and high-level goals developed by workgroups, followed by voting on key goals to include in the commission report.</p> <p>Breakout Discussion: Develop action items necessary to achieve the selected goals through focused workgroup collaboration.</p> <p>Next Steps: Assess the progress of action item development and set the stage for upcoming workgroup meetings</p>	Lisa Swoboda Dean Ertwine, Maryland Department of Commerce, Office of Federal and Military Affairs	Virtual
September 12, 2024	<p>Maryland State Department of Education Briefing: Gain insights into the Purple Star Schools program and MIC3 initiatives supporting military-connected students.</p> <p>Goals and Action Items Discussion: Review and refine drafted goals and action items using the provided report template.</p> <p>Breakout Discussion: Incorporate feedback from the commission to edit and finalize goals and action items.</p> <p>Next Steps: Assess the progress of goal and action item development and plan for upcoming workgroup meetings</p>	Mary Gable & Dr. Kaitlin Quigley; Maryland State Department of Education	Virtual
October 10, 2024	<p>Goals and Action Items Discussion: Review and refine drafted goals and action items using the provided report template.</p> <p>Breakout Discussion: Incorporate feedback from the commission to edit action items and key performance indicators (KPIs).</p> <p>Next Steps: Assess progress on goals and action items and plan for upcoming workgroup meetings</p>	Dana Burl; Maryland Department of Veterans and Military Families	Virtual
November 14, 2024	<p>Goals and Action Items Discussion: Review and finalize edits to goals, action items, and key performance indicators (KPIs) using the provided report template.</p> <p>Next Steps: Summarize progress and set the stage for the next meeting</p>	Dana Burl; Maryland Department of Veterans and Military Families	Virtual

Appendix V: Legislation

WES MOORE, Governor

Ch. 10

Chapter 10

(Senate Bill 88)

AN ACT concerning

Maryland Commission on Veterans and Military Families

FOR the purpose of establishing the Maryland Commission on Veterans and Military Families to study developing and implementing a strategic plan to make Maryland the best state for veterans and military families; and generally relating to the Maryland Commission on Veterans and Military Families.

SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND, That:

- (a) There is a Commission on Veterans and Military Families.
- (b) The Commission consists of the following members:
 - (1) the following members, appointed by the President of the Senate:
 - (i) a member of the Senate of Maryland who is also a member of the Maryland Senate Veterans Caucus;
 - (ii) a former member of the Senate of Maryland who is also a former member of the Maryland Senate Veterans Caucus; and
 - (iii) a representative of an organization that advocates on behalf of veterans and military families;
 - (2) the following members, appointed by the Speaker of the House:
 - (i) a member of the House of Delegates who is also a member of the Maryland House Veterans Caucus;
 - (ii) a former member of the House of Delegates who is also a former member of the Maryland House Veterans Caucus; and
 - (iii) a representative of an organization that advocates on behalf of veterans and military families;
 - (3) the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, or the Secretary's designee;
 - (4) the Adjutant General, or the Adjutant General's designee;

- (5) the chair of the Maryland Veterans Commission, or the chair's designee;
- (6) the chair of the Maryland Veterans' Home Commission, or the chair's designee;
- (7) the chair of the Maryland College Collaboration for Student Veterans Commission, or the chair's designee; and
- (8) the following members, appointed by the Governor:
 - (i) a representative of an organization that advocates on behalf of woman veterans; ~~and~~
 - (ii) a representative of the reserve component of any branch of the armed forces of the United States, not including the National Guard;
 - (iii) an individual who is a military spouse or a representative of a military spouse advocacy group;
 - (iv) an individual with experience in health care, whether somatic health care or mental health care; and
 - (v) an individual with experience in workforce development.
- (c) The Secretary of Veterans Affairs, or the Secretary's designee, shall serve as chair of the Commission.
- (d) The Department of Veterans Affairs shall provide staff for the Commission.
- (e) A member of the Commission:
 - (1) may not receive compensation as a member of the Commission; but
 - (2) is entitled to reimbursement for expenses under the Standard State Travel Regulations, as provided in the State budget.
- (f) The Commission shall:
 - (1) study and make recommendations for developing and implementing a statewide strategic plan to make Maryland the best state for veterans and military families, including legislative and budgetary recommendations;
 - (2) while forming the recommendations and drafting the study required under item (1) of this subsection, consult with the Office of Military and Federal Affairs and the Maryland Military Installation Council in the Department of Commerce; and

~~(2)~~ (3) identify key performance indicators that can be compared to those of other states in order to assess the quality of life for veterans and military families in Maryland relative to other states.

(g) On or before December 1, 2024, the Commission shall report its findings and recommendations to the Governor and, in accordance with § 2-1257 of the State Government Article, the General Assembly.

SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect June 1, 2024. It shall remain effective for a period of 1 year and 1 month and, at the end of June 30, 2025, this Act, with no further action required by the General Assembly, shall be abrogated and of no further force and effect.

Approved by the Governor, April 9, 2024.

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