

March 6, 2013

TO: THE PEOPLE OF LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT 8

LAW TO BOOST VETERANS' EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

The O'Malley Administration's legislative proposal to make it easier for veterans and their spouses to gain employment in Maryland has been praised by the U.S. Defense Department as one of the most comprehensive veterans' employment plans in the nation.

It should be emphasized that when a military family moves to Maryland, it is often difficult for the veteran and his or her spouse to re-enter the workforce and obtain occupational and professional licenses. The Veterans Full Employment Act of 2013 will expedite that process by giving priority to the processing of their applications. In addition, veterans and their spouses could be granted a temporary or "provisional" license until they meet all of the state's licensing requirements. This part of the bill was criticized by nurses who feared that a provisional license would allow an inexperienced person to work as a health care provider. However, testimony to refute that concern was offered by Lt. Governor Anthony Brown, who served as a colonel in Iraq. He attested that "the quality of professional care in the military is as good if not better than any other health care." Indeed, the idea that military medical workers would not be qualified to work in the civilian sector should be dismissed.

It should be noted that, according to legislative analysts, in Maryland in 2011, unemployment among veterans under age 25 was nearly 2% higher than among civilians of the same age. The State Department of Health and Mental Hygiene informs that the unemployment rate among military spouses is three times higher than among civilians.

Often, the veteran's military training, courses successfully completed, and experience fails to receive any academic credit from colleges or universities. Addressing this problem, the bill requires universities to better translate military courses and military experience into college credits.

For putting their lives on the line and making the sacrifices that come with serving in the military, we owe veterans and their families a debt we can never repay. The very least we can do for returning vets and their spouses is facilitate their re-entry into the workforce.

Please do not hesitate to contact me on this or any other legislative issue of concern to you. I encourage and welcome your input.