

Thank you **Chair Smith** and members of the **Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee**.

As the Deputy Secretary of Maryland's Department of Veterans Affairs, I respectfully ask the Committee for a **favorable report with an amendment on Maryland establishing Special Registration Plates for Gold Star and Next of Kin Families (Senate Bill 275)**.

Today, I stand before you to express our deepest gratitude and unwavering admiration for a group of individuals whose sacrifices often go unnoticed—Gold Star families. These families have paid the ultimate price, offering their loved ones in service to our nation – and their sacrifice is immeasurable.

When we speak of Gold Star families, we are referring to those who have lost a son, daughter, spouse, or close relative in the line of duty. These families bear a burden that is both profound and heart-wrenching, yet they stand resilient, a testament to the strength of the human spirit.

The gold star, symbolizing the loss of a family member in service, is a stark reminder of the sacrifices made by these extraordinary

families. It is a symbol not only of grief but also of honor and valor. Each gold star represents a life given selflessly for the ideals that define our great nation—freedom, justice, and liberty.

This legislation will go some small way toward honoring and recognizing those lives, and those families who gave the ultimate sacrifice.

I respectfully ask the Committee for a favorable report with amendment.