

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



James Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street, Room 320
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-841-3658 · 301-858-3658
800-492-7122 Ext. 3658
Fax 410-841-3586 · 301-858-3586
Bryan.Simonaire@senate.state.md.us

The Senate of Maryland
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

SB 89 - Environmental Licensure Veteran Designation

I worked with the Department of Environment and the military community on this consensus legislation. It basically allows a veteran to put a 'Veteran notation' on their professional environmental license.

First, let me say this is enabling legislation for the department, and setups the framework if the Department implements it.

I have worked with the Department and flexibility is key to success and this bill provides that flexibility.

This bill does two main things:

- 1) Enables the Department to issue state identification cards with the "Veteran" notation placed on it, and
- 2) If enabled, it establishes an outreach to the veteran if they want the Veteran notation and the applicant consents to being contacted by appropriate Executive Branch agencies regarding the applicant's eligibility for State or federal veterans' benefits.

This may sound familiar as this is what is done for the MVA driver licenses. Driver license applicants can have a veteran's notation placed on their driver license and be contacted by the Department of Veterans and Military Families regarding available veteran benefits.

The only difference is that this legislation is enabling.

The advantage to this approach is the Department knows when and how quickly to roll it out. They could even do a pilot on a subset of their ID cards. This bill gives the Department tremendous flexibility to achieve success.

In fact, the Boards are in the process of transition to a new licensing system by mid-2026, so this is ideal to start planning and to be able to implement on their schedule.

While the MVA program has been hugely popular, Maryland has a long way to go to reach our veterans as less than 50% of our veteran population is taking advantage the MVA program.

That's why it is imperative we use as many methods as possible to reach out to our veterans. This legislation provides one more tool to reach out to veterans while also providing additional benefits to the veteran community.

Additionally, in Maryland, we are looking to do everything we can to help reduce veteran suicide. One of the key factors is avoiding isolation.

This legislation provides multiple benefits, including reducing isolation:

1. This will help with networking and reducing isolation as more people including other veterans will see these licensees are veterans and hopefully reach out more to them.
 - a. One of the many factors of veterans' suicide is isolation especially as it pertains to a veterans' own service and experiences. This will allow for public awareness of veterans through thanking them for their service, other veterans seeing it and talking with them and re-enforcing they are not alone.
2. It provides another tool to reach out to our veteran population with their consent through using their contact information to share eligible benefits with them,
3. It is another avenue for the public to show appreciation for their service, and
4. Lastly, it also provides potential financial benefits to our veteran as many customers are more likely to hire a veteran, repeat as a customer or just give a bigger tip for their service, where applicable.

If you think about it, you can't beat this is a low-cost investment with all its potential benefits.

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