



General Assembly

**Substitute Bill No. 5415**

February Session, 2026



**AN ACT ESTABLISHING A VETERANS' AND MILITARY HEALTHCARE OMBUDSMAN FOR THE COORDINATION AND OVERSIGHT OF STATE AND LOCAL RESOURCES IN NAVIGATING FEDERAL HEALTH CARE BENEFITS FOR VETERANS, MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES AND THEIR FAMILIES.**

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

1 Section 1. (NEW) (*Effective October 1, 2026*) (a) There is established an  
2 Office of the Veterans' and Military Healthcare Ombudsman, which  
3 shall be within the Office of the Healthcare Advocate for administrative  
4 purposes only, to (1) coordinate with various resources, including, but  
5 not limited to, veterans' service officers and municipal veterans  
6 representatives, in assisting veterans who are eligible to receive health  
7 care through the United States Department of Veterans Affairs, and  
8 caregivers of such veterans, with navigating the health care system  
9 administered by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs, (2)  
10 coordinate with various resources in assisting active and retired  
11 members of the armed forces and National Guard and the families of  
12 such members who are eligible to receive health care through the United  
13 States Department of Defense, and caregivers of such members and  
14 families, with navigating the health care system administered by the  
15 United States Department of Defense, and (3) advocate for increased  
16 coordination among such various resources when deficiencies in such  
17 coordination are identified. The Governor shall appoint a Veterans' and  
18 Military Healthcare Ombudsman, who shall be selected from among

19 individuals with expertise and experience in a field concerning the  
20 health care of veterans, members of the armed forces and their families,  
21 to head the office.

22 (b) The Office of the Veterans' and Military Healthcare Ombudsman  
23 shall:

24 (1) Receive, review and attempt to resolve any complaints from  
25 eligible persons and caregivers described in subsection (a) of this section  
26 regarding obstacles to applying for or receiving health care through the  
27 United States Department of Veterans Affairs or the United States  
28 Department of Defense, including, but not limited to, difficulties in  
29 accessing assistance from existing state and municipal resources;

30 (2) Compile and analyze data on complaints described in subdivision  
31 (1) of this subsection;

32 (3) Assist such eligible persons and caregivers in understanding their  
33 rights and responsibilities in relation to the health care system  
34 administered by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs or the  
35 United States Department of Defense, as applicable;

36 (4) Provide information to the public, agencies, legislators and others  
37 regarding the problems and concerns of such eligible persons and  
38 caregivers and make recommendations for resolving those problems  
39 and concerns;

40 (5) Analyze and monitor the development and implementation of  
41 federal laws, regulations and policies relating to the health care systems  
42 administered by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs and  
43 the United States Department of Defense and recommend any changes  
44 the Veterans' and Military Healthcare Ombudsman deems necessary;

45 (6) Disseminate information concerning the availability of the Office  
46 of the Veterans' and Military Healthcare Ombudsman to assist such  
47 persons and caregivers with any health care concerns relevant to such  
48 persons or caregivers; and

49 (7) Take any other actions necessary to fulfill the duties of the Office  
50 of the Veterans' and Military Healthcare Ombudsman and the Veterans'  
51 and Military Healthcare Ombudsman as set forth in this subsection.

52 (c) On or before October 1, 2027, the Veterans' and Military  
53 Healthcare Ombudsman, in consultation with the Commissioner of  
54 Veterans Affairs and the Adjutant General, shall, within available  
55 appropriations, establish and maintain a veterans' and military health  
56 care education course that shall include educational presentations and  
57 materials regarding the health care systems administered by the United  
58 States Department of Veterans Affairs and the United States  
59 Department of Defense and state and local resources available to eligible  
60 persons and caregivers described in subsection (a) of this section in  
61 navigating such systems.

62 (d) On or before January 1, 2028, and annually thereafter, the  
63 Veterans' and Military Healthcare Ombudsman shall submit a report, in  
64 accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a of the general statutes,  
65 to the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having  
66 cognizance of matters relating to veterans' and military affairs, on (1) the  
67 implementation of this section, and (2) recommendations for legislation  
68 to improve such implementation.

This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections:		
Section 1	October 1, 2026	New section

**Statement of Legislative Commissioners:**

Throughout the section, references to "Veterans' Healthcare Ombudsman" were changed to "Veterans' and Military Healthcare Ombudsman", for consistency with other provisions of the section; in the last sentence of Subsec. (a), "veterans' health care" was changed to "the health care of veterans, members of the armed forces and their families," for consistency and clarity; in Subsec. (b)(3), "as applicable" was added, for clarity; in Subsec. (b)(5), "system" was changed to "systems" and "Affairs or" was changed to "Affairs and", for accuracy;

and in Subsec. (c), "military personnel health" was changed to "military health", for consistency, and ", respectively," was deleted, for clarity.

**VA**      *Joint Favorable Subst.*