



## Commissioned Officers Association of the U.S. Public Health Service

June 25, 2019

✓ Hon. Michael Peifer  
218 Ryan Office Building  
PO Box 202139  
Harrisburg, PA 17120-2139

Hon. Jake Wheatley Jr.  
36 East Wing  
PO Box 202019  
Harrisburg, PA 17120-2019

Dear Reps. Peifer and Wheatley:

I am writing to you in support of HB 1499, which would extend Pennsylvania veteran recognition to the men and women who have served in the US Public Health Service and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. These individuals are military veterans under federal law. 42 U.S. Code § 213 provides that, "Active service of commissioned officers of the [United States Public Health] Service shall be deemed to be active military service in the Armed Forces of the United States for the purposes of all laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs . . ." These officers receive full military pay and benefits while they are on active duty. They also carry the same DoD-issued Common Access Cards (ID cards) that are furnished to military servicemembers. They have served along-side their armed colleagues in every war of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

The Commissioned Corps of the USPHS is led by the U.S. Surgeon General, a Presidentially-appointed individual with the rank of Vice Admiral. These officers serve in twenty-two different federal agencies and departments, providing healthcare expertise to help keep our country safe. In the past ten years USPHS officers have deployed on 356 missions, in many instances serving with the U.S. armed forces as they did so.

We hope and trust that the legislature of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania will see its way clear to follow the federal example and afford to USPHS officers all the rights and privileges given to members of the four U.S. military services, as is provided in House Bill 1499.

Sincerely,

Col. James T. Currie, U.S. Army (ret.)  
Executive Director



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