

February 27, 2025

LD 366

"An Act to Ensure Consistency of Income Tax Deductions for Retired Members of the Uniformed Services"

Chairwoman Grohoski, Chairwoman Cloutier, and Honorable Members of the Taxation Committee:

My name is Joan Hunter. I'm a retired Rear Admiral in the U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps with 29 years of service. I am currently on the Board of Directors for the National Alliance on Mental Illness for Maine, a Board Member for the Military Officers Association of America (MOAA-national), and a member of the MOAA Southern Maine Chapter.

I am here today to strongly urge your support for LD 366. This important proposed legislation will ensure consistency of state tax deductions for all our Nation's eight Uniformed Services.

The USPHS was established in 1798 as a cadre of officers dedicated to serving sick and injured seamen as part of the Marine Hospital Service. Today we are a cadre of approximately 6000 trained, health professionals within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Our mission is: "...to protect, promote and advance the health and safety of our Nation."

Our physicians, nurses, pharmacists, dentists, veterinarians, scientists, engineers, and other health professionals conduct medical and behavioral health research, protect our citizens against unsafe medical products, and respond to the health care needs of populations during national emergencies, pandemics, and natural disasters. For example, during the Global War on Terror, my orders were to design, build and direct the first psychological health program for our National Guard soldiers and airmen in all 54 states and territories.

USPHS officers have the same ethical standards and professional conduct requirements as our "sister services". We are required to successfully train and maintain proficiency and readiness for deployment. We take the same oath of office as our Armed Service Members, earn the same military rank and pay grades, earn the same retirement pay and benefits, are covered by the GI Bill, are eligible for TRICARE military health care system, receive a formal discharge (DD214) and earn benefits for care by the Veterans Administration.

It is without hesitation I support and thank you for your effort to recognize the need for consistency among all eight of our Nation's Uniformed Services.

Respectfully,
Joan Hunter, RN, MSW
RADM, USPHS (Retired)