

SENATE MILITARY AND VETERANS' AFFAIRS  
COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

SENATE, No. 2815

**STATE OF NEW JERSEY**

DATED: AUGUST 20, 2020

The Senate Military and Veterans Affairs Committee reports favorably Senate Bill No. 2815.

This bill requires the New Jersey Department of Military and Veterans Affairs to assist former service members of the Armed Forces who were separated from the service with a general or other than honorable discharge due solely to their LGBTQ status with the appropriate and necessary forms and conditions to petition the United States Department of Veterans Affairs to have the designation of the discharge changed and recorded as honorable. The department will create, publish, and distribute material to all public agencies of the availability of the assistance, and create a uniform process to provide the assistance.

Under the bill, former service members who have the designation of their discharge changed will be eligible for the same rights, privileges, and benefits currently offered to service members who were honorably discharged. No fee will be charged to a former service member for seeking assistance, and information related to the change in the designation of a discharge will be confidential and not accessible to the public as a government record.

An estimated 100,000 LGBTQ service members were discharged from the military under less than honorable conditions. Too many service members have been shamed, and left without the benefits they earned. These service members lost their rights to both state and federal benefits. This bill will help ensure that they get the benefits and respect that they deserve.