

Dear Delegate Long:

I write in support of your House Bill 114 in the Maryland General Assembly. This legislation will help veterans with PTSD have access to trained service dogs at reduced cost. Our veterans will benefit to a substantial extent. Other states will emulate Maryland's initiative. I am a graduate of Johns Hopkins Medical School, 55 years ago. Since then I have had the privilege of helping my medical colleagues create the PTSD diagnosis and advance its treatment. We know that PTSD is real. It also is, unfortunately, stigmatized. As portrayed in Josh Aronson's documentary, "To Be of Service," our veterans with severe PTSD are, too often, reluctant to seek and use medical and psychiatric treatment. But they will accept a service dog and the relationship with a service dog may restore the veteran's ability to accept and show love, to participate in social events and to overcome flashbacks and fears. HB 114 is a significant step forward and I thank you and your colleagues for introducing this legislation.

A handwritten signature in blue ink on a white background. The signature reads "Frank M. Ochberg MD" in a cursive script.

Frank M Ochberg, MD

Clinical Professor of Psychiatry, Michigan State University

Former Associate Director, National Institute of Mental Health