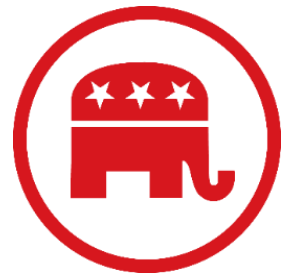


**David Perez SB 656 - Feb 22-2021.pdf**

Uploaded by: Ambrose, Nicolee

Position: FAV



February 22, 2021

The Honorable Chairman, Senator Guy Guzzone  
Maryland Senate Budget & Taxation Committee  
Miller Senate Office Building, 3 West  
Annapolis, MD 21401

The Honorable Chairwoman, Delegate Shane Pendergrass  
Maryland House Health & Government Operations Committee  
House Office Building, Room 241  
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Members of the Maryland Senate Budget & Taxation Committee and Members of the Maryland House Health & Government Operations Committee:

I humbly write to ask that this committee favorably report on the following:

**MD 2021 SB 656/HB 874 Maryland Veterans Trust Fund  
– CAM for Veterans Grant Program –  
Established (David Perez Military Heroes Act (End 22 a Day))**

During the pandemic, the suicide rate has increased dramatically, and our veterans are particularly at-risk. According to a 2020 *Baltimore Sun* article, military suicides jumped 20% in 2020, compared to 2019. But even before the pandemic, 22 veterans per day were committing suicide, according to a U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs report in 2013. There is something we can do to better support our veterans, and this bill will allow our veterans more access to treatment.

I'm grateful to Senator Salling and Delegate Cox for filing this bill honoring all of our veterans, and specifically David Perez. David was a friend to each of us. He served in the US Army for 11 years and he was a combat vet. But upon his return to the States, David suffered severe PTSD. David approached his challenges with frankness, and to distract himself from his demons, he spent his time in the most honorable way imaginable – by volunteering tirelessly to support his fellow veterans and the community. David volunteered for several organizations, but I was privileged to work with him supporting a charity which supports mothers who have lost a child to violence. David proudly served as Press Secretary and astounded us with his boundless energy. He did this to honor his mother and his deceased brother. From personal loss to PTSD due to combat, David could have accessed the help he needed to confront and heal from his PTSD, had this bill been law.

We can all be proud of this bill's two main objectives:

- 1) To help our struggling Maryland veterans access assistance for alternative forms of treatment;
- 2) To honor Mr. Perez's military service, his tireless dedication to continue serving the community upon his return, and to acknowledge the demons he wrestled as a result of PTSD. This bill allows David to represent in death all our veterans who have similarly struggled and lost their battle, while providing a better way forward.

Thus, I implore you to favorably report on this bill and allow our veterans to access funds from the Maryland Veterans Trust Fund to provide grants for PTSD, anxiety, depression, stress, etc. so they can obtain various medical treatments. Our Maryland veterans deserve our gratitude and support for their selfless service and sacrifice.

Thank you,  
Nicolee Ambrose

**2021-02-22-084848.PDF**

Uploaded by: Goodpaster, Laura

Position: FAV

**Hello Senator Guzzone and committee,**

**My name is Laura Goodpaster. David Perez was my son. I am here today asking for a favorable vote for SB656 Maryland Veterans Trust Fund – CAM for Veterans Grant Program – Established (David Perez Military Heroes Act (End 22 a Day) .**

**David Perez was born and raised in Maryland. When he was 17, he joined the military. He served in the Maryland Army National Guard for 11 years, he was a combat vet, and after he served his country he decided to dedicate his life to helping other veterans who served. David struggled with PTSD after his deployment in 2006, and in the fall of 2020 we lost David from the battle with his own challenges. Had this fund been available to him I believe he may still be with us.**

**As a military veteran myself I have seen the results of our veterans not having access to therapies that will help them to cope. That is why I support this bill, to honor the work that David did and to keep his memory, dedication, and passion to this issue alive as well as provide the struggling veterans in our State with assistance for alternative forms of treatment for their time serving our country.**

**Thank you**

**MMC\_SB 656\_2021\_Sallings\_B&T.pdf**

Uploaded by: Guibao, Patrick

Position: FAV



# MARYLAND MILITARY COALITION

*Serving Veterans through Legislative Advocacy*

STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 656-  
Maryland Veterans Trust Fund – CAM for  
Veterans Grant Program – Established (David Peerez Military Heroes Act  
(End 22 as Day)

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Chair Guzzone and distinguished members of the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee...The Maryland Military Coalition is in strong support for Senate Bill 656.

This bill would provide need funds for rehabilitative care for those veterans who have been injured psychologically by such trauma as PTSD and other stringent mental disorders and stresses from military service many occurring in combat zones.

The MMC strongly supports this measure and believe it would be a positive first step towards curbing and, hopefully, eliminating veteran suicide now believed to be as high as 22 per day, family turmoil and upheaval, homelessness among former service personnel and, unfortunately in some cases, criminal activity.

We view the Maryland Veterans Trust Fund, administered by our State Department of Veterans Affairs as the ideal vehicle for dispensing the needed revenues to those in need and to qualified professionals which we envision would be accomplished under the section 9-914.4.4 (E) (1) **APPLICATION AND APPROVAL PROESESSES; AND (2) ELIGIBITY STANDARDS.**

In closing, we believe Senate Bill 656 is a vital measure and a major step toward the healing for community members who live in daily desperation. The Maryland Military Coalition, comprised of 17 active service and veteran service organizations urgently request a favorable report and commend Senator Sallings for his compassion to the active military and his fellow veterans.

Yours, respectfully,

*Patrick Guibao*

Parick J. Guibao  
Vice President and  
Legislative Director  
Maryland Military Coalition

# **Ltr to Committee.pdf**

Uploaded by: salling, johnny

Position: FAV



JOHNNY RAY SALLING  
Legislative District 6  
Baltimore County

Budget and Taxation Committee

Public Safety, Transportation,  
and Environment Subcommittee



James Senate Office Building  
11 Bladen Street, Room 321  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401  
410-841-3587 · 301-858-3587  
800-492-7122 Ext. 3587  
JohnnyRay.Salling@senate.state.md.us

THE SENATE OF MARYLAND  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

February 24, 2021

Senate Budget and Taxation Committee

Re: SB 656 / HB 874 Maryland Veterans Trust Fund – CAM for Veterans –  
Established (David Perez Military Heros Act (End 22 a Day))

Position: Favorable

Dear Chair, Vice Chair, and Committee Members,

Thank you for accepting this letter of support for SB 656 / HB 874. This bill would work toward addressing our limited alternative health care options for veterans.

Post-traumatic stress disorder is a very real and very serious issue that many of our veterans face today, and regular medical options may not always be the best form of treatment for them. There is a growing body of studies that are beginning to show that alternative treatment is helpful for veterans suffering from PTSD and other mental health issues.

This bill will allow veterans who are suffering from PTSD and other mental health issues to be able to seek complementary and alternative medical treatments or CAM as it is known. These are treatments such as acupuncture, yoga, massage therapy, and relaxation treatments. Many times they can be unavailable either because of the inability to get the treatments in a timely manner or because they may not be accepted. This leaves a veteran in a tough spot of trying to self-fund for treatment. This bill would work to help bridge that gap by allowing funding for these alternative treatments so that our veterans can get the help they need. For those who have done so much to protect our freedoms, I believe this is great way to give back and help them, and I urge a favorable report on SB 656 / HB 874.

Sincerely,  
Senator Johnny Ray Salling

**HB 874 - SB 656 - letter of information,CH1.pdf**

Uploaded by: Owings, George

Position: INFO



## *Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs*

### *Office of the Secretary*

LARRY HOGAN  
GOVERNOR

BOYD K. RUTHERFORD  
LT. GOVERNOR

GEORGE W. OWINGS III  
SECRETARY

18 February 2021

The Honorable Guy Guzzone  
Chair, Budget & Taxation  
Members, Budget & Taxation Committee  
3 West Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, MD 21401

The Honorable Shane Pendergrass  
Chair, Health & Government Operations  
Members, Health & Government Operations  
241 House Office Building  
Annapolis, MD 21401

#### **SB 656/HB 874 Maryland Veterans Trust Fund – CAM for Veterans Grant Program – Established (David Perez Military Heroes Act (End 22 a Day))**

Dear Chairman Guzzone & Members of the Budget & Taxation Committee,

The Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs would like to share some information regarding SB 656/HB 874 – Maryland Veterans Trust Fund – CAM for Veterans Grant Program – Established (David Perez Military Heroes Act (End 22 a Day)).

The purpose of these bills is to require the Trust Fund to be used for ‘complementary and alternative medical treatments (CAM)’. The Trust Fund Administrator is not a medical or behavioral health professional. There is no one in MDVA who is professionally trained in CAM treatments (i.e. acupuncture, meditation, guided imagery, progressive muscle relaxation, biofeedback, etc). The MDVA does not have a behavioral health program. Therefore, it would take an extraordinary amount of time to research and vet programs. Further, the efficacy of such vetting may be questionable given that MDVA does not provide behavioral health services or have medical professionals on staff.

While there is limited evidence about the efficacy of CAM as a treatment for PTSD, the United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is offering the treatment to veterans enrolled in the Veterans Health Administration. CAM treatments are also provided at some Vet Centers located across Maryland. Vet Centers provide readjustment counseling for combat veterans of any service era as well as counseling for survivors of military sexual trauma. The VA is best suited to provide these treatments and has the capacity to not only provide the treatment, but to cover the cost, and to screen for suicide risk during appointments. It is unknown the degree to which civilian CAM treatment providers understand military culture, know suicide risk screening best practices, and the resources available to refer a veteran should they screen positive for risk.

Senate Bill 656/House Bill 874 Maryland Veterans Trust Fund- CAM for Veterans Grant Program- Established (David Perez Military Heroes Act (End 22 a Day) will fundamentally shift the Trust Fund from assisting veterans having financial difficulties to something completely different. One

singular grant administrator manages the Trust Fund with grants distributed most often for rent and utility assistance. Trust Fund Grants are distributed directly to the property manager or utility company, NEVER directly to the veteran. Because the bills state that the program 'is to provide grants to veterans' it would be impossible to ensure that grants were going for their intended purpose. MDVA must ensure the integrity of the Trust Fund and therefore will only provide grants to a reputable entity, i.e. BGE, Pepco, etc.

There is strong evidence economic and social conditions influence a person's health status. A 2019 study at the VA Pittsburgh Health Care System's Center for Health Equity Research and Promotion determined that seven negative social conditions were strongly associated with suicidal ideation and attempts. Of the seven, housing instability and financial or employment problems were two. The Trust Fund is designed to address housing and financial challenges. Depleting the Trust Fund and reallocating funds to a treatment already being provided by the VA would leave more veterans at risk of homelessness, financial instability and increased risk of suicide.

While there is benefit to alternative medical treatments for some veterans experiencing post-traumatic stress disorder, placing a program such as this within the MDVA, specifically the Trust Fund, will come with extreme barriers and challenges as there is simply no staffing to support implementation and management. If this bill should move forward, it is best suited to be implemented in an agency providing behavioral health services and within a program with CAM subject matter expertise.

The Department is proud to continue in its service to the veteran community and we do all that we can to ensure they have access to the benefits to which they are entitled.

Sincerely,

George W. Owings III  
Secretary