



MARYLAND MILITARY COALITION

Serving Veterans through Legislative Advocacy

February 8, 2022

Senator Delores Kelley
Chair, Finance Committee
Maryland Senate
3 East, Miller Senate Office
Building
11 Bladen Street
Annapolis MD 21401-1912

Dear Chair Kelley and Members of the Senate Finance Committee

As a retired service woman with thirty years' service and a combat veteran, I am writing in support of **Senate Bill 241 "Behavioral Health Crisis Response Services – 9-8-8 Trust Fund"** which requires the Maryland Department of Health to designate 9-8-8 as the primary phone number for the State's behavioral health crisis hotline as part of *a statewide initiative* for the coordination and delivery of *the continuum of behavioral health crisis response services* in the State. In addition to crisis call centers, this bill establishes mobile crisis team services and crisis stabilization centers—something that would have been helpful to McGruder students when a shooting occurred in their school.

According to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#), Maryland lost 657 souls to suicide last year (10.3 per 100,000). [Suitt](#) found that suicide rates among the United States public have been increasing for the past twenty years, but among active-duty personnel and veterans of the post-9/11 wars, the suicide rate is even higher, outpacing average Americans. Four times as many active-duty personnel and war veterans of post-9/11 conflicts have died of suicide than in combat. The report finds that these high suicide rates are caused by multiple factors, including risks inherent to fighting in any war such as high exposure to trauma, stress, the "military" culture and training, continued access to guns, and the difficulty of reintegrating into civilian life.

Currently, a veteran trying to reach a crisis line has to call a 10-digit number (1-800-273-8255), then press 1. Shifting to 9-8-8 would make seeking care easier. We know that the public has readily adapted to a standard 9-1-1 emergency number. Now we need a standard national crisis line number and Maryland needs additional services to meet the mental health needs of our citizens.

The Maryland Military Coalition, a voluntary, non-partisan organization representing 19 veteran service organizations who serve over 150,000 service men and women throughout our State. The Maryland Military Coalition **strongly supports** and urgently asks for a **FAVORABLE** report on Senate Bill 241. We applaud Senator Augustine for his continued commitment to improved mental health services and the veteran community here in Maryland.


Yours, respectfully


Lynn A. Nash, PhD, RN, PHCNS-BC, FAAN
CAPTAIN (Ret.), U.S. Public Health Service
Communications Director
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Member Organizations, Maryland Military Coalition


Air Force Sergeants Association

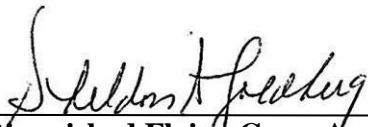

American Military Society

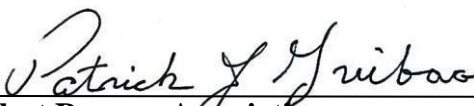

American Minority Veterans Research Project


Association of the United States Navy

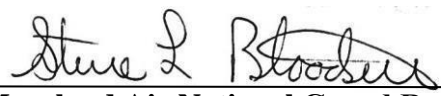

Commissioned Officers Association of the
US Public Health Service

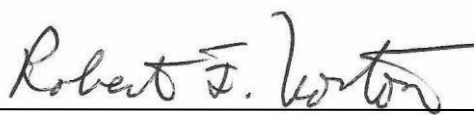

Disabled American Veterans


Distinguished Flying Cross Association


Fleet Reserve Association


Jewish War Veterans of the USA


Maryland Air National Guard Retirees'
Association



Military Officers Association of America

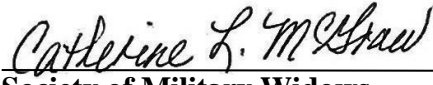

Military Order of the Purple Heart


National Association for Black Veterans


Naval Enlisted Reserve Association


NOAA Association of Commissioned Officers


Reserve Organization of America


Society of Military Widows


Veterans of Foreign Wars