



The Maryland Clinical Social Work Coalition

The MdCSWC, sponsored by the Greater Washington Society for Clinical Social Work, represents the interests of more than 9,500 licensed clinical social workers in Maryland.

TO: The Honorable Delores G. Kelley, Chair
Members, Senate Finance Committee
The Honorable Bryan W. Simonaire

FROM: Judith Gallant, LCSW-C, Chair, Maryland Clinical Social Work Coalition

DATE: February 4, 2020

RE: **SUPPORT** – Senate Bill 324 – *Veterans – Behavioral Health Services – Mental Health First Aid*

The Maryland Clinical Social Work Coalition (MdCSWC), sponsored by the Greater Washington Society for Clinical Social Work, represents the interests of more than 9,500 licensed clinical social workers in Maryland. On behalf of MdCSWC, we **support** Senate Bill 324.

The incidence of mental health and substance use disorders amongst veterans is well recognized. However, veterans and their families may not recognize their behavioral health needs, or even if recognized, do not know how to respond to those needs or access services. Recognizing the challenges faced by veterans and their families in addressing behavioral health issues, Senate Bill 324 includes “Mental Health First Aid” in the services Maryland’s Department of Health is required to coordinate with the Veteran’s Administration.

“Mental Health First Aid” is defined as training on how to identify and respond to signs of mental illness and substance use disorders. Incorporating “Mental Health First Aid” training into the services veterans and their families in Maryland are entitled to receive will greatly enhance the likelihood they will identify their behavioral health challenges and access needed services. This can positively impact the quality of the veteran’s lives, as well as that of their spouses, children and those close to them, and provide important services that veterans need to adjust to civilian life after their service to our country.

Our veterans and their families deserve the full support of the State as well as the federal government in addressing their mental health and substance use disorder challenges. Passage of Senate Bill 324 provides an effective tool to enhance that support. A favorable report is requested.

For more information call:

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