

**February 4, 2019**

**Chairman Delores G. Kelley  
and Members of the Finance Committee**

## **Testimony in Support of SB 324**

I was introduced to veterans at an early age, growing up in a small southern Minnesota town. My parents would take me down to memorial day and 4th of July parades. I would see WWI and WWII vets marching proudly while those watching would all cheer. These vets were all in the bright lights.

I see some of the vets now returning from our latest conflicts - mentally ill, chemically addicted, homeless, etc. These folks, by comparison, are in darkness.

I am on the board of Arundel Lodge ([www.arundellodge.org](http://www.arundellodge.org)) which cares for vets and others with similar issues. We house 110 clients and see another 3200 client visits each month. I see them in a line for our clinics on a Monday morning and think, there but for the grace of God go I.

I mention this to thank the Legislature for their great support of the Lodge. I became their board president about 30 years ago. We then did an audit and discovered a cash shortfall of about \$250K - we were not going to last more than 30 days. But I knew John Astle back then, and John got us an emergency state loan. We got a new director and a new finance person and paid back the loan.

Our headquarters back then was in rented space behind the bowling alley on Generals Highway near Crownsville. We were bursting at the seams and desperately needed more space. John and Speaker Busch got us a low-interest loan that enabled us to build our present headquarters on Solomons island road, south of Harbor Center mall. We also have an outpatient treatment center on Forest Drive.

A typical day starts for our clients with a hot breakfast. Then our mental and physical health clinics are available. Both are staffed by doctors and nurses. Then other support groups are also available. And job training is also provided. Many of our clients also work.

We thank the legislature for your support. We are a team working together to help those vets and other less fortunate folks.

Someone asked me what percentage of the folks in the area in need of our services actually receive them. My guess is less than 10%. There is a great need for these services and that is why that support of this bill is so critical.

To help those vets that are in darkness back into the light.

Thank you,

Jim Banwell