



Committee: Senate Finance
Title: Veterans – Behavioral Health Services – Mental Health First Aid
Bill Number: SB 324
Hearing Date: February 4, 2020
Position: Support

The Maryland Nurses Association (MNA) supports *Senate Bill 324, Veterans – Behavioral Health Services – Mental Health First Aid*. This bill would require the Department of Health, as part of its behavioral health services coordination for veterans, to include mental health first aid for veterans and their immediate families.

Mental Health First Aid is a course developed in 2001 to train people on how to identify and respond to signs of mental illness and substance use disorders. It also teaches strategies on how to encourage an open dialogue about mental health. Studies show that the program saves lives and improves mental health literacy while decreasing the stigma associated with mental illness.

Many service members return from active duty with a mental health condition requiring treatment, and in 2017, the suicide rate for veterans was 1.5 times the rate for non-veteran adults.ⁱ MNA strongly supports providing veterans with the services they need to address these issues, and Senate Bill 324 would provide another tool to help in this effort. Please join us in supporting those who have supported us.

Thank you for your consideration of our testimony, and we urge a favorable vote. If we can provide any further information, please contact Robyn Elliott at relliott@policypartners.net or (443) 926-3443.

ⁱ References: 2019 National Veteran Suicide Prevention Annual Report. Retrieved from: https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/docs/data-sheets/2019/2019_National_Veteran_Suicide_Prevention_Annual_Report_508.pdf

Mental Health First Aid. Retrieved from: <https://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org/>