

FAV HB579 Testimony.Cox.pdf

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Position: FAV

DANIEL L. COX
Legislative District 4
Frederick and Carroll Counties

Judiciary Committee

Subcommittees

Civil Law and Procedure
Family and Juvenile Law

Task Force to Study Crime
Classification and Penalties



The Maryland House of Delegates
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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

February 22, 2022

**Favorable Testimony HB 579, Maryland Veterans Trust Fund –
CAM for Veterans Grant Program
David Perez Military Heroes Act (End 22 a Day)**

Dear Chair McIntosh, Vice Chair Chang and committee members:

House Bill 579 establishes a grant program for veterans suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, depression, or stress, seeking relief and needing financial assistance to obtain complementary and alternative medical treatments.

According to a study at the Watson Institute of Public Policy and International Affairs at Brown University published in June of 2021:

- the suicide rate of veterans overall and adjusted for age and sex is 1.5 times that of the general population;
- this rate is likely a conservative one because, unlike earlier reports, the V.A. only counts veterans who were federally activated, leaving out Reservists and National Guardsmen who were not federally activated;
- one consequence of this change is that the oft-cited 21 veteran suicides per day figure is now about 17 per day;
- **the current actual rate is 27.5 per 100,000**, adjusting for age and sex and still absent Guardsmen and Reservists, meaning the rate has grown to be about 1.5 times worse since 2005;
- for veterans ages 18 to 34, the rate has increased by 76 percent since 2005.

These are heartbreaking and tragic statistic about the brave men and women who have served our country. And the statistics are getting worse.

HB579 is named in honor of Army veteran David Perez. He was a Marylander, a Veteran, a patriot with a big heart, and a friend of mine. He served in the United States Army for 11 years, and was a combat vet. After bravely and honorably serving his country he dedicate his life to helping other veterans deal with their challenges from their time served in the military. But in the fall of 2020 David's own challenges caught up with him and we lost him, way too soon.

According to the US Census Bureau's most recent statistics, there are at least 350,423 veterans living in Maryland. Minorities make up 137,807 of those veterans, and 50,418 of them were women. So veterans represent the length and breadth of our population, and so does the problem with veteran suicide. This doesn't hit only certain demographics of Maryland's population, it hits all because military service spans all demographics.

The expanded forms of treatment will provide more versatile care for those at risk of suicide. Treatments offered so far have obviously not been effective to meet the needs of enough of our veterans to bring down the numbers of suicides. Maryland veterans have sacrificed and fought for our freedoms, and as David did, they continue to serve our community even after they retire. They deserve treatment options that meet their needs; doing the same thing over and over again with the same poor results is not an option.

The men and women who lost their struggle with the often unseen impact of their service do not deserve to become nothing more than a statistic of our health service failures. They deserve to have their struggle make a difference for those who come after them.

I respectfully ask for a favorable report for HB579 Maryland Veterans Trust Fund – CAM for Veterans Grant Program – Established (David Perez Military Heroes Act (End 22 a Day)).

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D Cox', written in a cursive style.

Delegate Dan Cox, District 4
Frederick and Carroll Counties

HB579.pdf

Uploaded by: Laura Goodpaster

Position: FAV

Appropriations Committee

Delegate Maggie McIntosh

Delegate Mark S. Chang

**Room 121
House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401**

My name is Laura Goodpaster. David Perez was my son. I am here today asking for a favorable vote for HB579 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 and TBI 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
Laura Goodpaster

HB 579 - oppose.pdf

Uploaded by: George Owings

Position: UNF



Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs

Office of the Secretary

LARRY HOGAN
GOVERNOR

BOYD K. RUTHERFORD
LT. GOVERNOR

GEORGE W. OWINGS III
SECRETARY

February 14, 2022

The Honorable Maggie McIntosh, Chair
Members of the Committee
Appropriations Committee
121 House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Chairwoman McIntosh and Members of the Committee,

The Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs opposes HB 579 – Military Veterans Trust Fund – CAM for Veterans Grant Program – Established (David Perez Military Heroes Act (End 22 a Day)).

There are several reasons:

- This legislation would take the funding currently used to assist veterans experiencing financial difficulties and use it for a completely different purpose.
- The funding would put the monies into the hands of the individual instead of the corporation responsible for the debt making misuse and abuse a distinct possibility.
- CAM, or Complementary and Alternative Medicine, are not recognized by the US Department of Veterans Affairs as suitable treatments for the PTSD or depression.
- Lastly, I knew David Perez and he stopped by for a visit shortly before the unfortunate incident. He is but one of the 66 veterans who took their lives in 2019; the other 65 would not be recognized in such a manner nor the 104 over the previous 5 years.

While suicide among the veteran population, or any population, is a truly sad thing, this bill would not do what it hopes as the individual may or may not achieve their desired results as a result of the CAM. In addition, it would take monies away from a program designed to help veterans experiencing financial difficulties.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "GWO", with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

George W. Owings III
Secretary

GWO:kss