



MARYLAND MILITARY COALITION

Serving Veterans through Legislative Advocacy

STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 230

Behavioral Health Crisis Response Services—9-8-8 Trust Fund

February 2, 2022

Chairwoman Pendergrass and Members of the House Health and Government Operations Committee,

My name is CAPTAIN Lynn Nash. I served 30 years in both the Army and the United States Public Health Service, retiring in 2017. I'm a combat veteran – I was on the ground during Desert Storm/Desert Shield and I'm an emergency response veteran- I was in charge of the Department of Health & Human Services Office of Emergency Preparedness on 9/1—I sent people to New York, the Pentagon and Shanksville. I am here as the Communications Director for the Maryland Military Coalition.

HB 230 is a GOOD bill, requiring 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 very helpful to McGruder students when a shooting occurred in their school last month.

Last year, Maryland lost 657 souls to suicide. Suicide rates 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. Did you know that **FOUR times** as many active-duty personnel and war veterans of post-9/11 conflicts **have died of suicide than in combat**? 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.

Today, a veteran trying to reach a crisis line must call a 10-digit number (1-800-273-8255), then press 1. Shifting to 9-8-8 would make seeking care easier. Maryland needs a standard national crisis line number **and Maryland needs additional services to meet the mental health needs of our citizens, especially our veterans.**

The Maryland Military Coalition, is a voluntary, non-partisan organization representing 18 veteran service organizations who, in turn, serve over 150,000 Maryland uniformed services men and women and their families. The Coalition **strongly supports** House Bill 112 and asks for your **FAVORABLE** report.


Thank you to Delegate Crosby for sponsoring this important legislation.


Very respectfully,

Lynn A. Nash, CAPTAIN, U.S. Public Health Service (Ret)
Communications Director

Member Organizations, Maryland Military Coalition


Air Force Sergeants Association

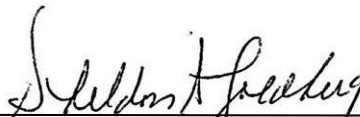

American Military Society

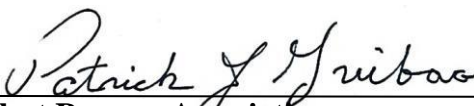

American Minority Veterans Research Project


Association of the United States Navy



Commissioned Officers Association of the
US Public Health Service

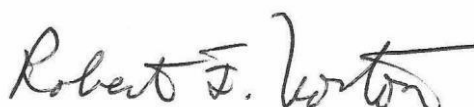

Disabled American Veterans



Distinguished Flying Cross Association


Fleet Reserve Association


Jewish War Veterans of the USA


Maryland Air National Guard Retirees'
Association

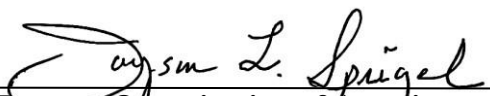

Military Officers Association of America

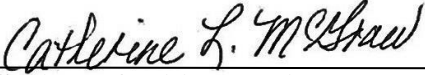

Military Order of the Purple Heart


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