



Because We C.A.R.E

Testimony on Maryland Senate Bill 0587 Health Care Facilities – Use of Medical Cannabis

TO: Senator Melanie Griffith Chair, and Senate members of the Economic Matters Committee
FROM: Shanetha Lewis, Veterans Initiative 22, Executive Director
DATE: 3/08/2023
POSITION: Support

Veterans Initiative 22 is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that focuses on helping Veterans, Family and First Responders by providing resources, employment opportunities, and continuously advocating for rights and access to affordable cannabis and Veteran rights. VI 22 was named as such after the estimated 22 Veterans who commit suicide daily due to PTSD, and it is our organization's goal to bring national awareness to this tragedy, while also working to improve the lives of Veterans across the country.

Additionally, we actively seek and advocate for more Veteran employment opportunities within the cannabis, alternative medicine, and holistic wellness industries. We invite businesses and organizations to evaluate hiring processes, business practices, and keep Veterans in mind; as they are, without a doubt, valuable assets to any organization.

Please note our strong **support** for this bill. For the following reasons:

First I want to say thank you for the opportunity to submit my testimony in support of SB. My name is Shanetha Marable Lewis and I hold a Master's degree in Medical Cannabis Science and Therapeutics from the University of Maryland School of Pharmacy, I am proud Army combat veteran, spouse of a 20 year retired Army combat veteran, and I am also the Executive Director of Veterans Initiative 22, a non-profit organization named as such in honor of the previously estimated 22 veterans who commit suicide daily. I say previously as a more recent study has sadly increased that amount to twice that of 44 veterans a day. The main factor that led to such a gross underestimation was the omission of the veteran deaths that were attributed to intentional opioid overdoses. Opioids are the number one prescribed medication for PTSD symptoms. This is important and ironic



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because veterans are twice as likely than that of the civilian population to be vulnerable to both suicide and to overdose.

As I wrote this testimony the word I found myself unsurprisingly circling back to was “Mission”, Then I contemplated on how does this bill advance VI22’s mission and the MGA mission to enact laws necessary for the welfare of the state’s citizens, and also the MHA mission through collective action to advance health care and the health of all Marylanders. This bill expands compassionate access to medical cannabis in a hospital facility to the 24% of combat veterans who suffer from PTSD, it increases patient welfare as it eases the fears of eventual hospitalization to the one in 5 veterans who are already using medical cannabis for PTSD symptoms 3x more likely to experience relief than that of those whom do not use cannabis, it advances the mental and physical health of PTSD sufferers by offering alternative viable therapeutic options to the one in 9 veterans that reportedly receive no relief of symptoms from existing pharmacotherapies, it offers dignity in death to those veterans whom approaching the end stages of life, it has the potential to advance the healthcare of all Marylanders by opening up opportunities for medical cannabis research and 92% of veteran families that only support but are requesting such studies. Relief from the painful experience of being forced to choose between not only extended in person treatment, but something that we consider a simple procedure to them is far more complex, when it doesn’t have to be. Finally, this bill honors the 83% who have served and sacrificed, that support medical cannabis, by offering them the autonomy over their medical care and treatments that they have so rightly earned.

Again I thank you for your time in reading my testimony and for your consideration of my position. Cannabis is medicine and access to cannabis improves lives!

We urge a favorable report on [SB0587](#)

Thank You,

Shanetha Lewis
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