



MARYLAND MILITARY COALITION

Serving Veterans through Legislative Advocacy

February 7, 2023

Honorable Josephine Pena-Melnik
Chair, Health and Government Operations Committee
House of Delegates
Room 241,
House Office Building
11 Bladen Street
Annapolis MD 21401-1912

HB 271 - 9-8-8 Trust Fund – Funding - **Request a FAVORABLE Report**

Dear Chair Pena-Melnik and Honorable Members of the House Health and Government Operations Committee

Last year I testified in support of the Senate Bill 293, “Behavioral Health Crisis Response Service - 9-8-8 Trust Fund” which was passed. On July 16, 2022, The Maryland Department of Health designated 9-8-8 as the State’s behavioral health crisis hotline which is already making measurable differences in suicide services within the State. Today I am offering support on behalf of HB 271, before your committee on February 7, 2023 which will provide a mandated appropriation of \$12M in funding beginning in 2025.

Chapters 145 and 146 of 2022 established the 9-8-8 Trust Fund to provide reimbursement for costs associated with designating and maintaining 9-8-8 as the universal telephone number for a national suicide prevention and mental health crisis hotline and developing and implementing a statewide initiative for the coordination and delivery of the continuum of behavioral health crisis response services. The fund may also be used for behavioral health crisis response services in the State, including (1) crisis call centers; (2) mobile crisis team (MCT) services; (3) crisis stabilization centers; and (4) other acute behavioral health care services. The fiscal 2023 budget includes \$5.0 million in general funds for costs related to 9-8-8 implementation. Per Chapters 145 and 146, the Governor must include \$5.5 million for the fund in the annual budget bill for fiscal 2024.

Maryland is home to approximately 390,000 veterans, 30,000 active-duty service members and 18,000 reservists/national guard members. In addition, there are 130,000 veteran households with children and another 60,000 reserve/national guard/active-duty dependents. The Maryland veteran suicide rate is 17% and hovers almost 4% higher than the total rate of 13% (per 100,000 population).

Until the implementation of the 9-9-8 call system, veterans had to call a 10-digit telephone number (1-800-273-8255), then press 1. Now, a veterans need only to call 9-8-8 to be connected to a local suicide call center, however, the availability of behavioral health resources is very limited. This bill provides

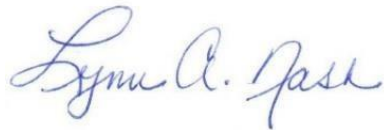
1101 Mercantile Lane, Suite 260 • Largo, Maryland 20774
(301) 583-8687 • (800) 808-4517

the needed funding to expand behavioral health crisis response services to all areas, but especially in rural settings where no services currently exist.

The Maryland Military Coalition, is a voluntary, non-partisan organization representing 19 veteran service organizations who, in turn, serve over 150,000 Maryland uniformed services men and women and their families. The Coalition ***strongly supports*** Senate Bill 003 and asks for your favorable report.

Thank you to Delegate Kelly for sponsoring this important legislation.

Yours Respectfully,

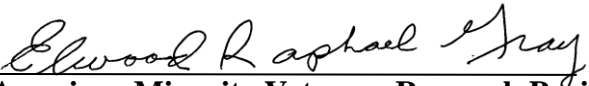
A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Lynn A. Nash". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Lynn A. Nash, PhD, RN, PHCNS-BC, FAAN
CAPTAIN (Ret)., U.S. Public Health Service
Communications Director

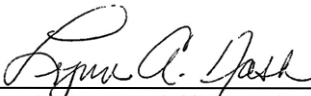
Member Organizations, Maryland Military Coalition

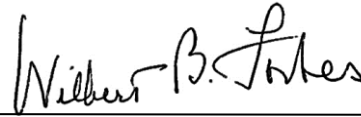

Air Force Sergeants Association


American Military Society


American Minority Veterans Research Project



Association of the United States Navy



Commissioned Officers Association of the
US Public Health Service

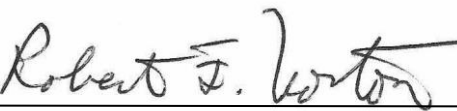

Disabled American Veterans

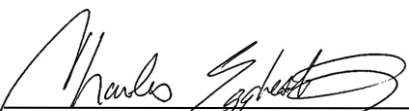

Distinguished Flying Cross Association


Fleet Reserve Association

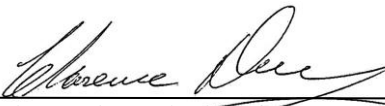

Jewish War Veterans of the USA


Maryland Air National Guard Retirees'
Association


Military Officers Association of America


Military Order of the Purple Heart


Montford Point Marines of America


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