



# MARYLAND MILITARY COALITION

*Serving Veterans through Legislative Advocacy*

Statement of CAPT Lynn Nash, PhD, RN  
Maryland Military Coalition

SB 615- General Provisions – Commemorative Days –  
Maryland Veterans Suicide Awareness Day  
March 7, 2024  
**FAVORABLE**

Dear Chair Feldman and Members of the Senate Education, Energy and the Environment Committee:

On behalf of the Maryland Military Coalition and as its Communications Director, I am here today to ask for a FAVORABLE report by the Committee on **SB 615 - General Provisions – Commemorative Days – Maryland Veterans Suicide Awareness Day**, sponsored by Senators Simonaire, Ready and Sallings, Jennings, Iam, Hershey, Hester, Gallion, Folden, Augustine, McKay, Jackson, Lewis-Youn and Brooks—all members of the Veterans Caucus. I am grateful to all of you for this measure. I am a nurse and I currently serve on the Governor’s Challenge to Prevent Suicide Among Service Members, Veterans and Families.

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. Do you know that **FOUR times** as many active-duty personnel and war veterans of post-9/11 conflicts **have died of suicide rather 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.

According to the Centers for Disease Control’s most recent data, **Maryland had 620 suicides in 2021<sup>1</sup>; of which 89 were veterans<sup>2</sup>.**

**Here are** some suicide statistics from the Department of Veteran Affairs<sup>3</sup>

- In each year from 2001 through 2020, the age- and sex-adjusted suicide rates of Veterans **exceeded those of non-Veteran U.S. adults.**
- In 2020, there were **6,146 Veteran suicides.**

<sup>1</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, [Suicide Mortality by State](#).

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, [State-Level Veteran Suicide Data](#): 2021 Update

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs, [2022 National Veteran Suicide Report](#).

Subject: **SB 615 - General Provisions – Commemorative Days – Maryland Veterans Suicide Awareness Day - Favorable**

- the rate for Veterans was **57.3% higher than that of non-Veterans adults.**
- **Firearms accounted for 71% of those deaths.**
- Suicide was the **13<sup>th</sup> leading cause of death among Veterans** overall, and **the second leading cause of death among Veterans under age 45.**
- More importantly, it is not only the veteran themselves that are at risk, but also the family members who often endure high stress, problems with finances, long deployments and single parenting.

Remember “22 a day”? Despite all that we have done to improve behavioral health services across Maryland and the Nation, the veteran rate of suicide is only down to **16.8 per day.**

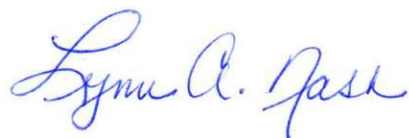
**Even ONE veteran suicide death is too much! Raising awareness of Veteran suicide helps.**

Maryland is home to 34,444 active-duty service members, 14,292 active-duty spouses and 25,642 reservists/national guard members with 28,019 family members<sup>4</sup>. These are Department of Defense numbers only and do not include the 1,700 active-duty U.S. Public Health Service (PHS) members and the 7,000 PHS retirees and their families or the active duty and retired National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) service members who also live in Maryland. In addition, there are 355,787 veteran households<sup>5</sup>. **Maryland must continue to raise awareness about veteran suicide.**

The Maryland Military Coalition, is a voluntary, non-partisan organization representing 21 veteran service organizations who, in turn, serve over 150,000 Maryland uniformed services men and women and their families. The Coalition ***strongly supports*** SB 615 - **General Provisions – Commemorative Days – Maryland Veterans Suicide Awareness Day** and asks for your **favorable report.**

We thank the Veteran Caucus Sponsors of this important legislation and their continued support of the uniformed services community in Maryland.

Respectfully,



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

Attachment: Maryland Veteran Suicide Data Sheet, 2021

Maryland Military Coalition Member Organizations Follow

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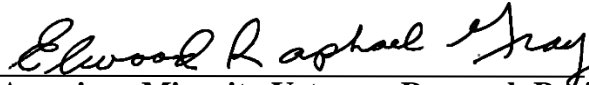
<sup>4</sup> [Military One Source](#), as of December 31, 2022

<sup>5</sup> [VA Claim Insider](#), August 10, 2023


Member Organizations, Maryland Military Coalition

  
Air Force Sergeants Association

  
American Military Society

  
American Minority Veterans Research Project

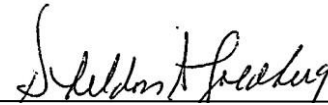
  
Association of the United States Navy


  
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

  
Maryland Veterans Chamber of Commerce

  
Military Officers Association of America

  
Military Order of the Purple Heart

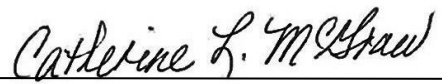
  
Montford Point Marines of America


  
National Association for Black Veterans

  
Naval Enlisted Reserve Association

  
NOAA Association of Commissioned Officers

  
Reserve Organization of America

  
Society of Military Widows

  
National Active and Retired Federal Employees  
Veterans Affairs Directorate, NARFE MD

  
Veterans of Foreign Wars