

Kevin Grubb - Witness testimony in Favor

B0887 Veterans Affairs – Responses to Arrested Veterans and Veterans in Crisis

My name is Kevin Grubb and I'm in favor of SB0887. I am a former Deputy Chief of Police for the Frederick Police Department and an Air Force Veteran. I'm currently employed with **The Independence Fund**, a sister organization to the **First Responders Action Group (FRAG) and the Veterans Justice Initiative (VJI)**. We are attempting to offer its programs to Maryland's first responders and Maryland Veterans through this bill.

As part of this Bill, we aim to intervene with Veterans at the initial 911 call or their initial contact with first responders. VJI focuses on training first responders on how to best interact with Veterans experiencing a mental health or substance abuse crisis. VJI also identifies additional state and federal resources to help local communities best respond to a Veteran in crisis like Veterans Court and VA sponsored programs.

We know that the services available to our heroes through the VA and other private entities are not taken advantage of and we are here to fill that gap. We are here to facilitate a long-term solution for communities and Veterans by advocating and working within the provided systems to improve the quality of life for our Veterans while assisting our Maryland communities to reduce potential long-term negative interactions before they happen.

Through this training and community connections, we hope to deescalate early experiences with the criminal justice system and explore other alternatives to arrest, emergency petitions, and just doing nothing. This will significantly lower recidivism and alleviate the burden on the criminal justice system. After being notified of an arrested Veteran, we will send a case worker to the local detention center and attempt to divert that Veteran to available programs.

In November and December of 2023, VJI trained and provided a 3-hr. block of instruction to over 50 officers at the University of Maryland Baltimore Police and Public Safety on how to identify veterans and how to deescalate crisis situations. Those officers received Maryland In-service credits from the Maryland Police and Corrections Training Commission for the training provided by VJI.

During that training, we were contacted by an attendee who became emotional and started to share his story of being in the military and what occurred during his deployment. After that contact we were able to connect him with a case worker at **The Independence Fund** and he is now receiving counseling. We not only provide training, but also case work and outreach to Veterans and First Responders

We help close the gap on what services the Veterans Administration can provide/do not have the resources to provide.

Again, I support SB0887.