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**SB 615 General Provisions - Commemorative Days - Maryland Veterans Suicide
Awareness Day
FAVORABLE
Senate Education, Energy and Environment Committee
March 8, 2024**

Good Afternoon Chair Feldman and members of the Senate Education, Energy and Environment Committee. I am Larry Walton, an advocacy volunteer and executive council member with AARP Maryland. I am also a Vietnam Veteran. I am also resident of Berlin Maryland. AARP MD advocates on behalf of two million Marylanders age 50 and over. I am here today to support in support of SB 615 General Provisions—Commemorative Days- Maryland Veteran’s Suicide Awareness Day. We thank Senator Simonaire for sponsoring this bill.

SB 615 requires the Governor to annually proclaim July 11 as Maryland Veterans Suicide Awareness Day.

At AARP we value the freedom and rights secured by veterans, the military and their families. The service and sacrifices will never be forgotten. AARP will continue to advocate for veterans’ issues; we’ll provide relevant information and resources to assist them and their loved ones with whatever challenges or opportunities they face.

Veteran’s suicide is a tragedy. According to an AARP article in 2023, a [new study](#) suggests the rate of suicide among veterans may be higher than United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) reports show. The study from [America’s Warrior Partnership](#) in collaboration with The Department of Defense (DOD) and The University of Alabama found the rate of Veteran suicide was 24 a day nationally, compared to what the VA is reporting as 17.

Suicide among Veterans is a problem. It is an issue that cannot be easily fixed, but it is one that should be addressed, and we believe SB 615 will bring greater awareness of veteran suicide and the tools available to help veterans and their families. It will be a day of reflection, recollection, and determination for Maryland Veterans, Service Members, Family Members, to remember this tragedy.

We respectfully request a favorable report for SB 615. For questions or additional information, please feel free to contact Tammy Bresnahan, Associate State Director of Advocacy at tbresnahan@aarp.org or by calling 410-302-8451.

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