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ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA

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February 8, 2020

To whom it may concern,

We are writing in support of the Sheila E. Hixson Behavioral Health Services Matching Grant Program for Service Members & Veterans (SB0904/HB1515) that calls for the creation of a state fund to provide matching grants to community-based organizations providing evidence-based behavioral health treatments for service members (including the Guard and Reserves), veterans, and their family members. There is great need for behavioral health services among veterans, service members and their families in Maryland. There are approximately 399,000 veterans living in Maryland, of which an estimated 24,000 have been deployed to Iraq or Afghanistan. Across the state, approximately 10,000 veterans are dealing with post-traumatic stress or major depression. We know that veterans comprise 18% of all deaths by suicide in Maryland and this group is twice as likely as non-veterans to die by suicide. Community-based organizations play a crucial role in providing timely, evidence-based services that fill the existing gaps in the VA system.

Founded in 1979, the Anxiety and Depression Association of America (ADAA) is an international nonprofit organization dedicated to the prevention, treatment, and cure of anxiety, depression, OCD, PTSD, and co-occurring disorders through education, practice, and research. With more than 1,800 professional mental health ADAA is a leader in education, training, and research. More than 11 million people from around the world visit the ADAA website annually (and click on more than 38,000,000 pages) to find current treatment and evidence-based research information and to access free resources and support. ADAA's member base includes many of the country's leading PTSD researchers and clinicians. The ADAA website works with its members to provide cutting-edge information about PTSD through website content, blog posts, webinars, podcasts, informational brochures, and links to important community resources for those struggling with PTSD. ADAA also convenes an annual conference with more than 140 sessions focused on sharing current research and treatment advances for anxiety disorders, depression and PTSD. 1,300 mental health professionals from across the US and around the globe attend to share, network and learn.

The VA clearly has not been able to adequately meet this growing need. Having a strong network of community-based organizations that understand military culture and in particular, the needs of women, is critical. The Sheila E. Hixson Behavioral Health Services Matching Grant Program is a step towards solving the problem and would position Maryland as a national leader in caring for its veterans and military family members. We encourage its passage.

Sincerely,

Susan K. Gurley, JD  
Executive Director