



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.

22 March For Life Inc, is Nonprofit 501c3 organization that focuses on Veterans and First Responder suicide awareness and prevention. Our organization tackles the issue of suicide from many angles with the goal of immediate relief to help those who suffer from PTSD and suicidal thoughts. We provide resource connections and guidance.

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. We strongly encourage its passage.

Sincerely,

Terry Shreiner, Jr.
CEO