



**THE AMERICAN LEGION**  
Department of Maryland  
Legislative Commission

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**STATEMENT IN SUPPORT FOR SENATE BILL 789**  
**PUBLIC HEALTH – MARYLAND SUICIDE FATALITY COMMITTEE**  
**(SUICIDE MORTALITY REVIEW and PREVENTION ACT OF 2020)**

March 4, 2020

Madam Chair Kelley and distinguished members of the Senate Finance Committee,

The American Legion Department of Maryland is extremely concerned over the continuous and rising number of deaths by suicide in our State, particularly among veterans and we firmly believe Senate Bill 789 is an affirmative step to minimize and reduce these tragedies.

In Maryland the veteran suicide total in 2016 according to the United States Department of Veterans Affairs was 67 out of a national total of 6,079 or 11 percent. Ironically, the largest age for those taking their lives by their own hands was 75 or older according to this study.

A year earlier veterans accounted for 14.3 percent.

The annual number of suicides from 2000-2010 noted the by gender was for women, 5.2 percent among non-military and 20.9 percent for veterans. For non-military men it was 28.7 percent and for former service personnel it was 32.1 percent.

The Maryland Governor's Commission on Suicide Prevention in 2015 stated veterans accounted for 14.3 percent of deaths by suicide.

A report by the National Violent Death Reporting system in a survey of 16 states including Maryland reported 20 veterans took their lives daily.

Finally, the VA in 2019 averages the suicidal death rate among veterans to be 22 losses of life a day.

The American Legion representing over 48,000 active duty members, veterans who have served in all wars since 1917 along with their families—all Maryland residents—say it is long past due to have a comprehensive evaluation on the reasons for this tragic daily loss along

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with a meaningful mental and physical programs designed to stem the tide of this devastating loss.

In closing we respectfully request a favorable report on Senate Bill 789. We also commend Senator Eckhardt for her deep compassion toward humanity by authoring this measure.

Yours, respectfully

*Patrick Guibao*

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Chair  
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