

HB 605/

SB 164 Veterans - Behavioral Health Services - Men

Uploaded by: Bresnahan, Tammy

Position: FAV



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HB 605/

**SB 164 Veterans - Behavioral Health Services - Mental Health First Aid
SUPPORT**

Senate Finance Committee

January 26, 2021

Good Afternoon Chairwoman Kelley and Members of the Senate Finance Committee. I am Tammy Bresnahan, Director of Advocacy for AARP MD. As you know, AARP Maryland is one of the largest membership-based organizations in Maryland, encompassing almost 850,000 members **and more than 200,000 veterans.**

AARP is a nonpartisan, nonprofit, nationwide organization that helps people turn their goals and dreams into real possibilities, strengthens communities and fights for the issues that matter most to families such as healthcare, employment and income security, retirement planning, affordable utilities and protection from financial abuse.

SB 164 requires behavioral health services for which the Maryland Department of Health provides service coordination for veterans including mental health first aid and requiring that mental health first aid consist of training for veterans and the immediate family of veterans on how to identify and respond to signs of mental illness and substance use disorder. HB 164 also requires a report be sent to the Governor. We thank Senator Simonaire for being a champion to Maryland Veterans.

This initiative is particularly important as it focuses identifying and coordinating and training for veterans and their families. There are clear links between Post Traumatic Stress Injury, pain management leading to opioid addiction, and Veteran's suicide.

The most Veteran's suicide statistics are disturbing. In August 2016, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs released its landmark report on Veteran suicide. Their analysis reviewed millions of Veterans' records from 1979 to 2014 from every state in the nation. The results, updated in 2018, noted:

- About 20 Veterans a day nationwide commit suicide;
- Of those, about 14 will have had little or no contact with VA Health services; and
- 982 Maryland Veterans committed suicide between 2005 and 2016.

There is a common misperception that the Department of Veterans Affairs' services are adequate to address this dire situation. Nothing could be further from reality! Nationally, only about half of our twenty million Veterans are eligible receive VA health care.

Real Possibilities

In Maryland, only about 22% of 380,000 Veterans receive care through the VA. Not to mention that Veterans family members are not eligible for VA care. **Clearly, there is still a sizeable population at risk.**

In contrast with a “government only” approach, nonprofit organizations, in partnership with the government, offer the agility to rapidly identify and respond to the immediate needs of the populations served. They also offer Maryland significant cost-savings as the participating nonprofit organizations will need to not only develop effective programs with meaningful metrics, they will have to raise their portion of the funds match. Nonprofits, with their extensive utilization of volunteer support, deliver high-value services at low cost. We urge you to favorably consider this approach.

Speaking from personal experience, and as a sister of decorated combat Vietnam Veteran with Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome, being able to understand and identify underlying issues is imperative to seeking treatment. My brother Michael received three purple hearts and bronze star. He went to Vietnam at age 19 and never came back the same. My I only wish, more attention should have been given to suffering veterans when they come home. He died in 2007, hit by a car while walking on November 11th. He never received the help he needed. Let’s make sure our Vets are taken care of emotionally, mentally, and financially—it’s the least we can do.

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AARP Maryland respectfully requests a favorable report for Senate Bill 164.

For questions or additional information, please feel free to contact Tammy Bresnahan, Director of Advocacy at tbresnahan@aar.org or by calling 410-302-8451.

HB 605/

2021 LCPCM SB 164 Senate Side.pdf

Uploaded by: Faulkner, Rachael

Position: FAV



Committee: Senate Finance Committee

Bill Number: Senate Bill 164 HB 605

Title: Veterans – Behavioral Health Services – Mental Health First Aid

Hearing Date: January 26, 2021

Position: Support

The Licensed Clinical Professional Counselors of Maryland (LCPCM) supports *Senate Bill 164 – Veterans – Behavioral Health Services – Mental Health First Aid*. This bill requires the Maryland Department of Health to provide Mental Health First Aid training to veterans and their immediate family members on how to identify and respond to signs of behavioral health disorders.

Until recently, federal rules from the Department of Veterans Affairs and TRICARE had a patchwork of provisions restricting licensed clinical professional counselors from providing mental health services to veterans and their families, exacerbating the lack of availability of mental health providers. Through the advocacy of licensed clinical professional counselors, these federal rules were recently clarified, expanding mental health services.

As such, LCPCM has a strong history of advocating for the expansion of mental health services to veterans and their families; and we strongly support the availability of Mental Health First Aid training to this population. This will prove especially helpful for those that either cannot access services through the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs or are otherwise reluctant to seek mental health treatment.

Thank you for your consideration of our testimony, and we urge a favorable vote. If we can provide any further information, please contact Rachael faulkner at rfaulkner@policypartners.net or 410-693-4000.

HB 605/

Legislative_SB164_2021_Finance_Simonaire.pdf

Uploaded by: Guibao, Patrick

Position: FAV



HB 605

THE AMERICAN LEGION
Department of Maryland
Legislative Commission

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STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 164 VETERANS – BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES – MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID

Madam Chairwoman Kelley, Vice Chairman Feldman and distinguished members of the Maryland Senate Finance Committee,

The Maryland Military Coalition a consortium of 16 active and uniform service and veteran support groups believe the purpose outlined in Senate Bill 605 is a far-reaching approach to resolving the drug crises many returning servicemen and women suffer through daily and is considered by U. S. Health officials to be a leading factor in the 22 deaths by suicide average among veterans in the nation daily.

SB 164 is a monumental approach to aid veterans enduring the malignant effects of opioids and other addictive drugs. The collaboration between various Federal and State agencies will be vital of bringing direct assistance to the veteran and the care giver family member as well.

This bill also provides an in-depth approach to treatment including assessments, individual and family therapy, detoxification services and medical assisted treatment. It should be envisioned that in some cases hospitalization will be necessary but with the participation of the U. S. Department of Veterans Affairs this factor should be easily remedied.

The lives at stake could be saved and the families who endure this crises could be made whole again through the success full passage of SB 164. We deeply commend Senator Simonaire for his fervent and continuous compassion to our veteran community.

Yours, respectfully

[Patrick Guibao](#)

Patrick J. Guibao
Chairman
THE AMERICAN LEGION
Department of Maryland
Legislative Commission

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MMC_SB164_2021_Finance_Simonaire.pdf

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Position: FAV



MARYLAND MILITARY COALITION

Serving Veterans through Legislative Advocacy

HB 605

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Yours, respectfully

[Patrick Guibao](#)

Patrick Guibao
Vice President & Legislative Director
Maryland Military Coalition
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HB 605/

SB0164_FAV_MdCSWC_Veterans Mental Health First Aid

Uploaded by: Kasemeyer, Pam

Position: FAV

MdCSWC

The Maryland Clinical Social Work Coalition

The MdCSWC, sponsored by the Greater Washington Society for Clinical Social Work, represents the interests of more than 9,500 licensed clinical social workers in Maryland.

TO: The Honorable Delores G. Kelley, Chair
Members, Senate Finance Committee
The Honorable Bryan W. Simonaire

FROM: Judith Gallant, LCSW-C, Chair, Maryland Clinical Social Work Coalition

DATE: January 26, 2021

RE: **SUPPORT** – Senate Bill 164 – *Veterans – Behavioral Health Services – Mental Health First Aid*

The Maryland Clinical Social Work Coalition (MdCSWC), sponsored by the Greater Washington Society for Clinical Social Work, represents the interests of more than 9,500 licensed clinical social workers in Maryland. On behalf of MdCSWC, we **support** Senate Bill 164.

The incidence of mental health and substance use disorders amongst veterans is well recognized. However, veterans and their families may not recognize their behavioral health needs, or even if recognized, do not know how to respond to those needs or access services. Recognizing the challenges faced by veterans and their families in addressing behavioral health issues, Senate Bill 164 includes “Mental Health First Aid” in the services Maryland’s Department of Health is required to coordinate with the Veteran’s Administration.

“Mental Health First Aid” is defined as training on how to identify and respond to signs of mental illness and substance use disorders. Incorporating “Mental Health First Aid” training into the services veterans and their families in Maryland are entitled to receive will greatly enhance the likelihood they will identify their behavioral health challenges and access needed services. This can positively impact the quality of the veteran’s lives, as well as that of their spouses, children and those close to them, and provide important services that veterans need to adjust to civilian life after their service to our country.

Our veterans and their families deserve the full support of the State as well as the federal government in addressing their mental health and substance use disorder challenges. Passage of Senate Bill 164 provides an effective tool to enhance that support. A favorable report is requested.

For more information call:

Pamela Metz Kasemeyer
Danna L. Kauffman
410-244-7000

Greater Washington Society for Clinical Social Work: www.gwscsw.org

Contacts: Coalition Chair: Judy Gallant, LCSW-C; email: jg708@columbia.edu; mobile (301) 717-1004
Legislative Consultant: Pamela Metz Kasemeyer, Schwartz, Metz & Wise PA, 20 West Street, Annapolis, MD 21401

Email: pmetz@smwpa.com; mobile (410) 746-9003

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SB0164_FAV_MedChi, MACHC_Veterans Mental Health Fi

Uploaded by: Kasemeyer, Pam

Position: FAV



MID-ATLANTIC ASSOCIATION OF
COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTERS
Serving Maryland and Delaware



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TO: The Honorable Delores G. Kelley, Chair
Members, Senate Finance Committee
The Honorable Bryan W. Simonaire

FROM: Pamela Metz Kasemeyer
J. Steven Wise
Danna L. Kauffman

DATE: January 26, 2021

RE: **SUPPORT** – Senate Bill 164 – *Veterans – Behavioral Health Services – Mental Health First Aid*

On behalf of the Maryland State Medical Society and the Mid-Atlantic Association of Community Health Centers, we submit this letter of **support** for Senate Bill 164.

Senate Bill 164 includes “Mental Health First Aid” in the services Maryland’s Department of Health (MDH) is required to coordinate with the Veteran’s Administration. “Mental Health First Aid” is defined as training for veterans and the immediate family members of veterans on how to identify and respond to signs of mental illness and substance use disorders.

Under current law, subject to the limitations of the State budget, MDH, in collaboration with the United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), the Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs, the Maryland National Guard, and the Maryland Defense Force, provides behavioral health service coordination for veterans in Maryland in order to connect them to behavioral health services which may be available through the VA. If behavioral health services are not available or accessible through the VA, MDH is to provide service coordination for veterans to connect them to behavioral health services which may be available through the Behavioral Health Administration, until such federal services can be accessed and obtained.

It is well recognized that veterans often face significant behavioral health issues that are often triggered by their experiences while serving. While it is critically important that veterans have access to the full range of behavioral health services, often veterans and their families do not recognize their behavioral health needs and/or are not knowledgeable on how to respond to mental health and substance abuse challenges or access services. Incorporating “Mental Health First Aid” training into the services veterans and their families in Maryland are entitled to receive will greatly enhance the likelihood they will identify their behavioral health challenges and access needed services.

Senate Bill 164 is a straightforward and needed expansion of the services our veterans deserve that if implemented should greatly enhance veterans and their families’ ability to access needed behavioral health services. A favorable report is requested.

For more information call:

Pamela Metz Kasemeyer
J. Steven Wise
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MD Catholic Conference_FAV_SB0164.pdf

Uploaded by: Kraska, MJ

Position: FAV



ARCHDIOCESE OF BALTIMORE † ARCHDIOCESE OF WASHINGTON † DIOCESE OF WILMINGTON

January 26, 2021

SB 164 HB 605

Veterans - Behavioral Health Services - Mental Health First Aid

Senate Finance Committee

Position: Support

The Maryland Catholic Conference (“Conference”) represents the public policy interests of the three Roman Catholic (arch) dioceses serving Maryland: the Archdiocese of Baltimore, the Archdiocese of Washington, and the Diocese of Wilmington.

Senate Bill 164 will require that the behavioral health services for which the Maryland Department of Health provides service coordination for veterans under certain provisions of law include mental health first aid; requiring that mental health first aid consist of training for veterans and the immediate family members of veterans on how to identify and respond to signs of mental illness and substance use disorders; requiring entities teaching a mental health first aid course to report certain information to the Department.

Behavioral health issues, including depression and suicide, are public health challenges that causes immeasurable pain among individuals, families, and communities across the country. This is an urgent issue that the Maryland General Assembly and citizens of Maryland must address, working to protect and help the veterans and their families who have bravely fought and served our state and country.

Those experiencing mental illness are among the most marginalized and underserved in our society. The Catholic Church through its parishes, charities and other ministries reaches out pastorally to those struggling with mental illness. Because the Catholic faith embraces an integrated view of the human person as both corporeal and spiritual, we welcome the sciences as one pathway to knowledge of the human person. Pope St. John Paul II said "*Whoever suffers from mental illness always bears God's image and likeness in themselves, as does every human being. In addition, they always have the inalienable right not only to be considered as an image of God and therefore as a person, but also to be treated as such.*"

The Conference appreciates your consideration and, for these reasons, respectfully requests a favorable report on Senate Bill 164. HB 605

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SB 164 - Senator Bryan Simonaire Testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Leber, Verna

Position: FAV

BRYAN W. SIMONAIRE
Legislative District 31
Anne Arundel County

—
MINORITY LEADER
—

Education, Health, and
Environmental Affairs Committee

Subcommittees

Chair, Alcohol

Health
—

Joint Committee on the Chesapeake and
Atlantic Coastal Bays Critical Area



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The Senate of Maryland
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Written Testimony in SUPPORT of SB 164 HB 605

Madam Chair and members of the Finance Committee, I am here to introduce and voice my support for Senate Bill 164 – Veterans – Behavioral Health Services – Mental Health First Aid.

Senate Bill 164 would require that the behavioral health services for which the Maryland Department of Health provides service coordination for veterans under certain provisions of law include mental health first aid and would require that mental health first aid consist of training for veterans and the immediate family members of veterans on how to identify and respond to signs of mental illness and substance use disorders. The bill would also require entities teaching a mental health first aid course to report certain information to the Department.

HB 605/

SB0164 Testimony w MHFA-10 Year Impact Report.pdf

Uploaded by: Martin, Dan

Position: FAV



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Senate Bill 164 Veterans – Behavioral Health Services – Mental Health First Aid

Finance Committee

January 26, 2021

Position: SUPPORT

The Mental Health Association of Maryland is a nonprofit education and advocacy organization that brings together consumers, families, clinicians, advocates and concerned citizens for unified action in all aspects of mental health, mental illness and substance use. We appreciate this opportunity to present this testimony in support of Senate Bill 164.

SB 164 requires the Maryland Department of Health to include mental health first aid among the behavioral health services it coordinates for veterans and their families. Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) is a world-renowned, evidence-based program that teaches how to recognize and respond to a person with a mental health or substance use concern or crisis.

MHAMD worked with the Maryland Behavioral Health Administration, the National Council for Behavioral Health, and the Missouri Department of Health to adapt MHFA for the United States. Since 2009, MHAMD has been responsible for the development, oversight and implementation of the statewide *MHFA Maryland* program. The program has trained over 36,000 Marylanders, including over 700 instructors, 15 of whom are self-identified veteran instructors. MHAMD utilizes a corps of instructors and master trainers who primarily deliver free and scholarship-based trainings through a state grant. This ensures that no one seeking MHFA training is turned away.

The availability of MHFA training for veterans and their families is particularly important given the high prevalence of behavioral health concerns among veterans and active duty military members:

- In 2015, veterans accounted for 14.3% of suicide deaths as compared to 8% of the adult US population
- On average, one US veteran dies by suicide nearly every hour
- Veteran suicides in Maryland average over 100 per year (308 from 2015-2017)

In addition to the skills taught in the core MHFA class – which includes information about various behavioral health disorders, risk factors and warning signs of mental health concerns, and a 5-step action plan to help someone in crisis – *MHFA Maryland* features a veterans' module that includes:

- A discussion of military culture and its relevance to the topic of mental health
- A discussion of the specific risk factors faced by many service members and their families such as mental and physical trauma, stress, separation, etc.
- How to break down the stigma associated with substance use disorders and mental illnesses like anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and more
- How to reach out to those who suffer in silence, reluctant to seek help
- Community resource information

SB 164 should help get MHFA training to more veterans and their family members. For this reason, MHAMD supports this bill and urges a favorable report.

10-YEAR IMPACT REPORT

Bringing essential mental health training
to communities throughout Maryland.



IMPACTING, PARTNERING, TRANSFORMING

The Mental Health Association of Maryland (MHAMD) is the second oldest mental health advocacy group in the nation. It was formed more than a century ago when a group of concerned citizens gathered in Baltimore to take action to improve the lives of individuals living with mental illness. From prevention and early intervention to treatment and crisis intervention, MHAMD works to ensure that Marylanders have access to services when and where they need them. Training individuals in Mental Health First Aid,[®] so they can better respond with care and support to loved ones, coworkers or a stranger is one of the many ways we work to improve the mental health of communities across our state. Tens of thousands of Marylanders have been helped since we worked with other national leaders to bring this evidence-based program to the U.S.

In 10 years, over 36,000 Marylanders have been trained and they in turn have made a positive impact on the lives of countless others. Our Mental Health First Aiders have created a network of awareness about mental health in communities across the state and reduce the stigma of mental illness every day. We're proud of the MHFA Maryland program's impact over the past decade and are excited about opportunities to continue to build community capacity to recognize and respond to mental health needs in every corner of Maryland.

Linda J. Raines, CEO
Mental Health Association of Maryland

Mental Health First Aid Maryland, a program of the Mental Health Association of Maryland, is pleased to present this 10-year impact report. One of the original partners of the Mental Health First Aid program, the Mental Health Association of Maryland in partnership with the State of Maryland Behavioral Health Administration, the National Council for Behavioral Health and the Missouri Department of Health worked collaboratively to develop this program and bring it to the United States.

Over the course of 10 years, our program has aimed to reach all Marylanders. Mental Health First Aid, an 8-hour public education national certification course, teaches individuals, professionals, businesses and community members how to recognize and respond to a person with a mental health concern or crisis. Many people may not talk about mental health concerns due to stigma. One of the goals of the program is to help reduce stigma by emphasizing important messages that mental health concerns are common and wellness and recovery are possible.

Mental Health First Aid Maryland looks forward to our next 10 years bringing this training to others all across Maryland. The skills taught in training empower individuals to reach out, provide help and support to a person in need. Together, we can continue to expand our reach and strengthen our communities.

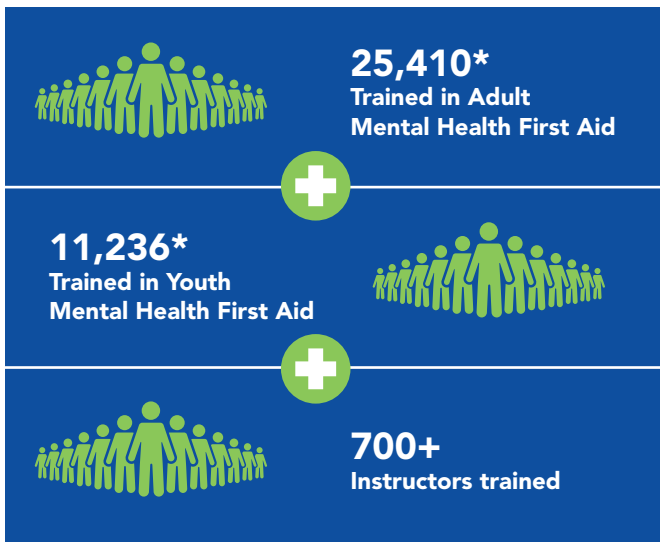
Jennifer Treger, Director
Mental Health First Aid Maryland



IMPACTING

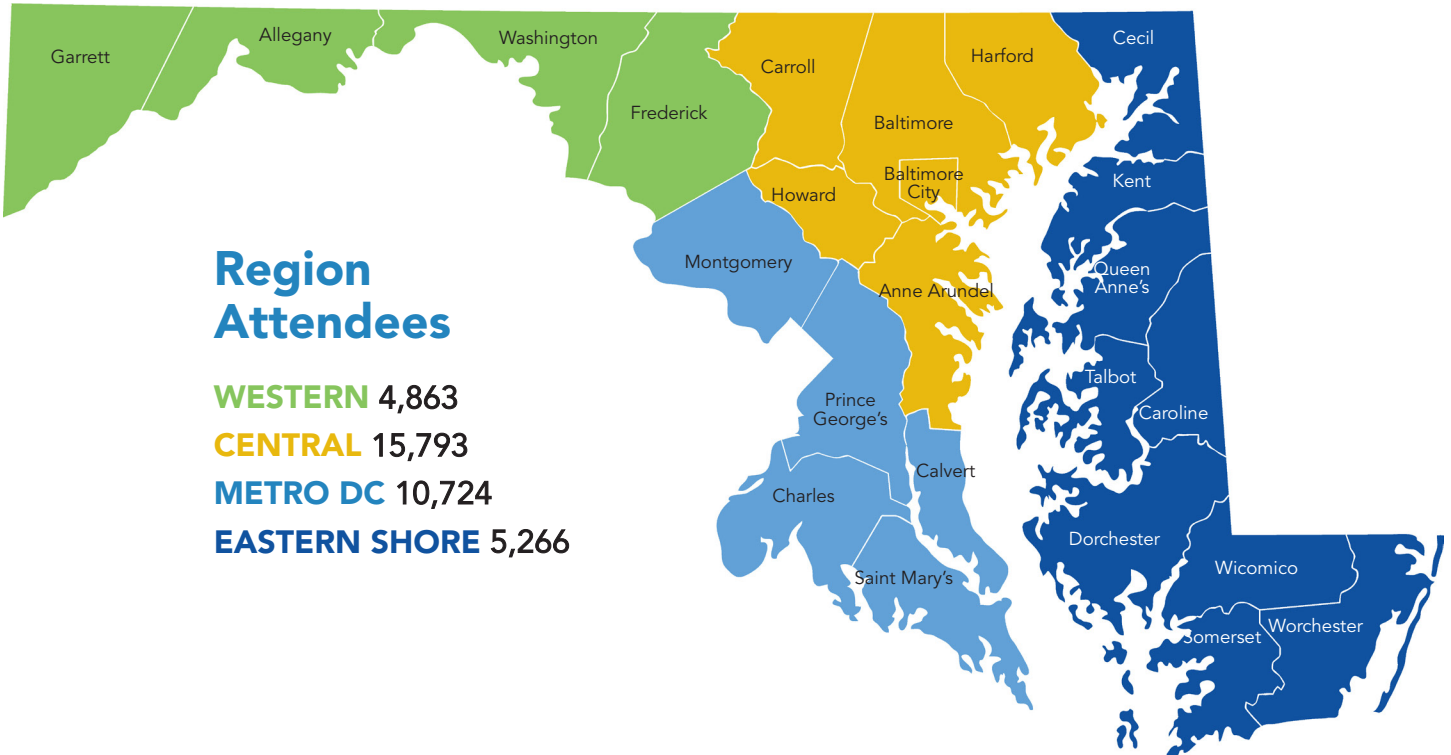
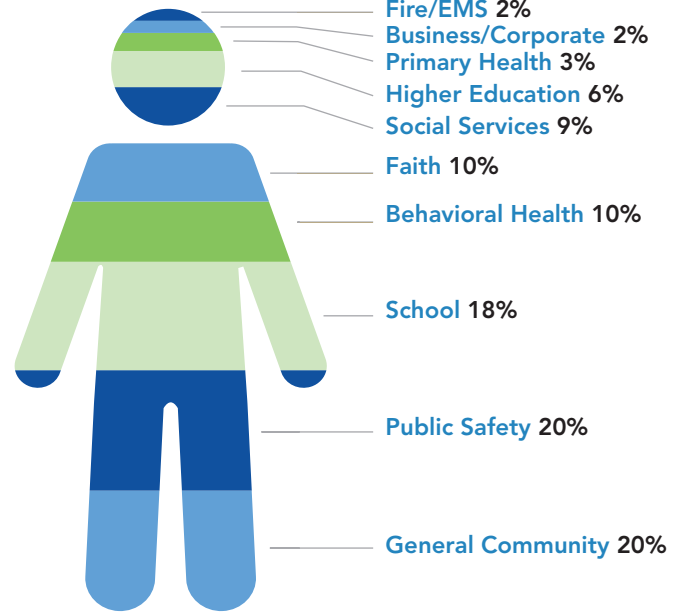
Since the inception of the program, over 36,000 people have been trained in Mental Health First Aid. Imagine the impact. 36,000 people who have the skills to provide a person who may be experiencing a mental health concern or crisis with the care support, and resources they may need. As we work to create safer, caring and more supportive communities across the state, Mental Health First Aid is critical to the support we can provide.

36,646* Marylanders trained in 10 years



*Numbers of first aiders trained are updated on a monthly basis.

Audiences



IMPACTING

Mental Health First Aid Maryland has been part of Mental Health First Aid USA since the program's inception. Together with the **State of Maryland Behavioral Health Administration (formerly known as Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene)**, we leveraged federal funding from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration to create the first Mental Health First Aid USA curriculum. This was accomplished in partnership with the Missouri Department of Mental Health and the National Council for Behavioral Health. With continued funding during the past 10 years, Mental Health First Aid Maryland has been able to make instructor and first aider training affordable and accessible to individuals across the state.

TOTAL GRANTS: \$4.7 million



PARTNERING

Key stakeholders and community partners were instrumental in the development, implementation and growth of Mental Health First Aid Maryland. Through the power of partnerships, MHFA Maryland has expanded to include State-level organizations such as the Maryland State Department of Education, State of Maryland Police and Correctional Training Commission, and the State of Maryland Department of Juvenile Services.

Department of Juvenile Services:

2,000+

DJS staff trained in Adult and Youth Mental Health First Aid

85% More incidents of youth at risk for self-injury or suicide identified

DJS has incorporated Youth Mental Health First Aid as mandatory training for all of its new and existing staff giving them the necessary skills to identify mental health concerns. From a study conducted with staff at DJS:

- Over 50% of the time staff used Youth Mental Health First Aid in situations of growing concern hopefully averting a crisis.

“The Maryland Department of Juvenile Services requires all staff to complete Youth Mental Health First Aid. This highly participatory training provides practical skills for our staff to respond to youth who are experiencing mental health issues or is in a behavioral health crises. In addition, YMHFA provides a foundation as they learn skills to assist youth with substance abuse or trauma issues.”

Robert Anderson, LCSW-C
Social Work Manager Department of Juvenile Services

Maryland Schools:

6,800+

First Aiders Trained

381 Instructors Trained

Over 13,500+

Referrals of Youth to Resources

- In recent years, the Mental Health Association of Maryland has partnered with the Maryland State Department of Education, local school districts and school partners to provide Youth Mental Health First Aid training through the federally funded MD AWARE grant.

6,800+ school personnel and partners trained, including:

Teachers, Coaches, Administrators, Nurses & Health Specialists, School Safety Officers, Bus Drivers, District Leaders, Guidance and Pupil Personnel Workers Parents, Community Partners
“The partnership between the Mental Health Association of Maryland and the Maryland State Department of Education has been invaluable in the implementation of Youth Mental Health First Aid and Mental Health First Aid in schools. The training content has been instrumental in building the capacity of school staff to identify, assess, and locate appropriate resources for individuals in a crisis.”

Deborah Nelson, Ph.D., NCSP

Section Chief, School Safety and Climate, Specialist, School Psychological Services Maryland State Department of Education

Police and Corrections:

7,200+

Public Safety Professionals Trained

Public safety officials were early adopters of Mental Health First Aid in Maryland.

- Maryland Police and Correctional Training Commissions were one of the first in the nation to offer education credit for the program.
- Several police and corrections jurisdictions have embedded the curriculum into their training and orientation programs.
- Multiple schools and universities across the state offer Mental Health First Aid and Youth Mental Health First Aid for their school resource officers and campus police

“After a decade, Mental Health First Aid continues to be one of the flagship programs used by Maryland public safety to enhance its ability to recognize, respond to, and compassionately assist people in crisis. It has not only reduced stigma and enhanced service but has become a champion for first responder self-care, wellness and resilience.”

Lieutenant Marc Junkerman

Harford County (MD) Sheriff's Office

TRANSFORMING

BUILDING SKILLS, SAVING LIVES:

Mental Health First Aid has the power to transform communities. Anyone in our community may encounter a person who is experiencing a mental health problem or crisis at work, school or in our everyday lives. By teaching Marylanders the skills to stop, listen and provide support, we are creating the ripple effect that builds greater hope and positive change for people in distress.

Asking important questions

"We trained all of our pupil personnel workers (PPWs) as a group. I always tell people if they aren't comfortable asking the direct question if someone is thinking of suicide, they should go home and practice. About a year after the training, a young lady went missing after telling a friend she was suicidal. The PPW found her in a park and was able to be confident and ask her the question. **The young lady was actively suicidal and the PPW was able to get her to the hospital and get her the help she needed.**"

—Charles County Public Schools

Breaking down Stigma

"Because of my participation in Mental Health First Aid I now have a greater understanding of my sister Inee's struggles and a sincere appreciation of her courage and strength. I wish I had the training while she was living. That would have made a big difference in both of our lives and how I would have responded to her."

—Minister Joyce M Frazier

"**Mental Health First Aid has empowered me to not feel afraid to talk to someone who's crying...** just to stop and be in the moment with that person and let them know that they're not alone"

—MHFA Participant

RESULTS:

INITIAL RESULTS

A survey conducted with first aiders trained in Maryland showed:

Half of respondents reported using the ALGEE action plan at a time of distress as opposed to a crisis.

LASTING RESULTS



TRANSFORMING AND BEYOND

In the past 10 years, Mental Health First Aid Maryland has worked to create infrastructure and embed instructors in key agencies and organizations throughout the state. With the work we have accomplished, there is still more to do.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

The goals of the Mental Health First Aid Maryland program are:

- Raise visibility of MHFA generating a ripple effect of prevention & wellness
- Create a state-wide culture of MHFA - Not as a program but as a community changer
- Focus in high need areas:
 - o Domestic Violence
 - o Farmers, Rural Communities
 - o First Responders- Law Enforcement and Fire
 - o Veterans & their Families
 - o Youth & School Systems
- Create a community among instructors especially in hard to reach areas geographically
- Increase professional development through certification and licensure requirements

**Continue to help our communities be more caring,
compassionate, and supportive.**



**“It really gives you the
skills you need to
identify—and ultimately
help—someone in need”**

—First Lady Michelle Obama
on being trained in Mental Health First Aid

WHO SHOULD BE TRAINED IN MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID?

Schools

Teachers

Coaches

Barbers

Veterans

Faith Leaders

Fire/EMS

Higher Education
staff and students

General
Community

Hospital Staff

Peer Recovery
Specialists

Behavioral Health
Professionals

Law Enforcement
Public Safety

Primary Care staff

YOU!



Mental Health First Aid Maryland is a program of the Mental Health Association of Maryland.

To learn more, please visit www.mhfamaryland.org
or email at mhfatraining@mhamd.org



MENTAL
HEALTH
FIRST AID®
MARYLAND

HB 605/

2021 AFSP_MD FAVORABLE Testimony SB 164 Veterans -

Uploaded by: Maskaleris, Sue

Position: FAV

**RE: SUPPORT of Senate Bill 164
(Veterans - Behavioral Health Services - Mental Health First Aid)**

January 26, 2021

Susan M. Maskaleris
Board of Directors – Advocacy/Public Policy Chair
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention Maryland Chapter (AFSP-MD)
Home Address: 3545 Smoke Tree Ct, Waldorf, Maryland 20602
Home Phone: (301) 751-8781 Email: smaskaleris@gmail.com

Chair Kelley, Vice Chair Feldman, and Members of Finance Committee:

My name is Susan Maskaleris and I live in Waldorf, Maryland. I am the Advocacy/Public Policy Chair with the Maryland Chapter of the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP-MD). I lost my father, a retired Air Force firefighter, to suicide when I was 14 years old. I am a former U.S. Army officer, and my husband is a retired Army officer with 22 years active service. I live with a mental health condition, depression, and my husband lives with anxiety and depression.

Thank you for the opportunity to share testimony in support of Senate bill 164 **Mental Health First Aid Training for Veterans** which requires Mental Health First Aid to be included in the veteran behavioral health services coordinated by the Department of Health and to include training for veterans and their families on how to identify and respond to signs of mental illness and substance use disorders; requires related reports to the Department and Governor on the number of Veterans and family members who take the course.

Maryland is home to approximately 385,000 veterans, 30,000 active-duty service members and 18,000 reservists/national guard members. In addition, there are 130,000 veteran households with children and another 60,000 reserve/national guard/active-duty dependents. According to the MDVA 2019 Annual Report, only about 40% of Maryland veterans are enrolled in the VA healthcare system. The Maryland veteran suicide rate is 17% and hovers almost 4% higher than the total rate of 13% (per 100,000 population). There is no single cause of veteran and military suicide, but by treating and preventing mental health and substance use conditions, limiting access to lethal means, and empowering veterans to live and thrive in their communities, we can save lives.

Mental Health First Aid is a course that gives people the skills to identify and assist an individual who may be developing a mental health problem or showing signs of a mental health crisis. The evidence behind the program demonstrates that it does build mental health literacy, helping the public identify, understand, and respond to signs of mental illness. Just as CPR training helps a person with no clinical training assist an individual following a heart attack, Mental Health First Aid training helps a person assist someone experiencing a mental health crisis and who may be contemplating suicide. In both situations, the goal is to help support an individual until appropriate professional help arrives. Participants of Mental Health First Aid training learn a single 5-step action plan known as ALGEE, which

includes assessing risk, respectfully listening to and supporting the individual in crisis, and identifying appropriate professional help and other support. Participants are also introduced to risk factors and warning signs for mental health or substance use problems, engage in experiential activities that build understanding of the impact of illness on individuals and families, and learn about evidence-supported treatment and self-help strategies.

Veterans often experience occupational hazards and stressors on the job, such as traumatic events during deployment that can in turn increase risk for suicidal behavior or exacerbate existing risk for suicide related to other factors. In addition, the military culture is one that discourages showing signs of weakness, which can contribute to a reluctance to seek help or self-disclose mental health concerns or suicidal thoughts.

We owe it to our veterans to support a culture where it is a sign of strength to seek help and where veterans are supported in mental health just as they are in other aspects of health. Furthermore, veterans who understand how to recognize mental health issues can have more positive interactions with their families and with peers who may be struggling and connect them to appropriate services, leading to better outcomes for those at-risk.

Suicide can be prevented through early detection of veterans who may be in crisis or struggling with their mental health and by connecting those veterans and their families to resources and treatment services. I urge you to support SB 164 to ensure that veterans and their families have direct access to services and programs to effectively address any mental health conditions, or personal or work-related stress and prevent veteran suicide.

Members of the Finance Committee, the AFSP Maryland Chapter is grateful for your consideration of SB 164 and for working with your colleagues and other agencies to address the suicide rate among our military and veteran community. We all have a role to play in preventing suicide, and with your support, passage of this legislation will affirm the state's commitment to improving the lives of Maryland's veterans and their loved ones and to prevent the tragic loss of life to suicide in the future. We urge a favorable report on SB 164. Please feel free to contact me at smaskaleris@gmail.com or 301-751-8781 with any questions or if you would like additional information.

Susan M. Maskaleris

Chapter Advocacy/Public Policy Chair

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HB 605/

MRHA SB164 Veterans - Behavioral Health Services -

Uploaded by: Orosz, Samantha

Position: FAV



Statement of Maryland Rural Health Association

To the Finance Committee

January 26, 2021

Senate Bill 164 Veterans – Behavioral Health Services – Mental Health First Aid

POSITION: SUPPORT

Chair Kelley, Vice Chair Feldman, Senator Simonaire, and members of the Finance Committee, the Maryland Rural Health Association (MRHA) is in SUPPORT of Senate Bill 164 Veterans – Behavioral Health Services – Mental Health First Aid.

MRHA supports this legislation that requires mental health first aid training for veterans and immediate family members of veterans on how to respond to signs of mental illness and substance abuse disorders. This legislation would also require the Maryland Department of Health to make available behavioral health services to veterans that were not previously available, and provides timely coordination of these services. This legislation is in line with MRHA’s mission to educating and advocating for the optimal health and wellness of rural communities and their residents. It is most important now during the COVID-19 pandemic to prioritize the expansion and accessibility of behavioral health services, especially for vulnerable populations such as veterans in rural areas and beyond.

Rural Maryland represents almost 80 percent of Maryland’s land area and 25% of its population. Of Maryland’s 24 counties, 18 are considered rural by the state, and with a population of over 1.6 million they differ greatly from the urban areas in the state.

Maryland law states that “many rural communities in the State face a host of difficult challenges relating to persistent unemployment, poverty, changing technological and economic conditions, an aging population and an out-migration of youth, inadequate access to quality housing, health care and other services, and deteriorating or inadequate transportation, communications, sanitations, and economic development infrastructure.” (West’s Annotated Code of Maryland, State Finance and Procurement § 2-207.8b)

MHRA believes this legislation is important to support our rural communities and we thank you for your consideration.

Lara Wilson, Executive Director, larawilson@mdruralhealth.org, 410-693-6988

HB 605

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Position: FAV

SENATE BILL 164 – SUPPORT

**Senate Bill 164 – Veterans – Behavioral Health Services – Mental Health First Aid
Senate Finance Committee
January 26, 2021**

My name is Brian Smith. I am a post-9/11 combat Veteran, I have PTSD, I have lost friends to the scourge of Veteran suicide, and I am here today to offer my **support Senate Bill 164**.

Last year when a Veteran friend took his life, he left friends, family, and two unanswered questions asked by many that knew him. “How could I have known?” and “what could I have done?”. Thus, the challenge and the solution are rooted in knowledge and empowerment.

As you know, this legislation implements a Mental Health First Aid program for Veterans and their families. This training program will enable Veterans and their immediate family members to identify and respond to signs of mental illness and substance abuse disorders.

Why is this so important?

- 2.7 million service members have been to the war zones of Iraq and Afghanistan since 2001, and **over half of them have deployed more than once**.
- At least **970,000 of these Veterans**, over one third, have some degree of officially recognized disability as a result of the wars.
- About 18.5% of Service members returning from Iraq and Afghanistan have post-traumatic stress disorder – that’s nearly **500,000 Veterans!**
- 20 Veterans die by suicide each day.

Many times that number of Americans have borne the costs of war as spouses, parents, children, and friends cope with their loved ones’ absence, mourn their deaths, or greet the changed person who often returns.

Many Iraq and Afghanistan veterans face a life of disability due to the physical and psychological injuries they sustain in the war zones. Many more live with physical and emotional scars despite lack of disability status.

Sadly, due to the stigma, many Veterans with mental health problems do not seek help or delay seeking help. Even when people decide to get help, it’s frequently after many years of delay. The longer a person waits to seek help, the more difficult their recovery can be. All too often, these Veterans take their lives.

Mental Health First Aid provides effective awareness and action-oriented training that can help address this mental health crisis, and it is widely applicable beyond the Veteran community.

As for those two questions.

“How could I have known?” This training helps provide the knowledge of potential mental health warning signs.

“What could I have done?” This training provides actionable recommendations on effectively helping to connect Veterans with the appropriate professional caregivers.

Now that we know about Mental Health First Aid training, **what can we do here today?**

Please move this important legislation forward!

I respectfully request a favorable report for Senate Bill 164.

HB 605

SB 164 - Support - MPS WPS.pdf

Uploaded by: Tompsett, Thomas

Position: FAV



HB 605

January 26, 2021

The Honorable Delores G. Kelley
Senate Finance Committee
3 East Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Support – SB 164: Veterans - Behavioral Health Services - Mental Health First Aid

Dear Chairman Kelley and Honorable Members of the Committee:

The Maryland Psychiatric Society (MPS) and the Washington Psychiatric Society (WPS) are state medical organizations whose physician members specialize in diagnosing, treating, and preventing mental illnesses, including substance use disorders. Formed more than sixty-five years ago to support the needs of psychiatrists and their patients, both organizations work to ensure available, accessible, and comprehensive quality mental health resources for all Maryland citizens; and strives through public education to dispel the stigma and discrimination of those suffering from a mental illness. As the district branches of the American Psychiatric Association covering the state of Maryland, MPS and WPS represent over 1000 psychiatrists and physicians currently in psychiatric training.

MPS and WPS support Senate Bill 164 (SB 164). The United States has been actively involved in military conflicts for almost two decades with many United States military personnel serving multiple deployments to Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, and Africa. Deployments of this nature are extremely stressful situations as modern-day combat has become much more non-conventional. Rates of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, and other psychiatric illnesses are too high with our military veterans. Unfortunately, suicide amongst active-duty soldiers and veterans has become all too commonplace. The United States Department of Veterans Affairs and the United States military's individual branches are struggling to provide mental health care to both veterans and soldiers alike. Through bills such as SB 164, Maryland is taking thoughtful steps in assisting veterans and their families in healing.

SB 164, if codified, will increase awareness of mental illness and substance use disorders as well as attune our community to the idea of early intervention. The training guidelines of SB 164 will reduce stigmas associated with mental illness and treatment, connect more military personnel and veterans to meaningful mental health services, potentially reduce fatalities due to overdose and suicide in the military community, and establish the complex support system that co-morbid conditions create.



**Washington
Psychiatric Society**

Therefore, MPS and WPS ask the committee for a favorable report. If you have any questions with regard to this testimony, please feel free to contact Thomas Tompsett Jr. at tommy.tompsett@mdlobbyist.com.

Respectfully submitted,
The Maryland Psychiatric Society and the Washington Psychiatric Society
Legislative Action Committee