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Maryland Senate Budget and Taxation Committee
The Honorable Chairman / Senator Guy Guzzone
3 West
Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Maryland House Health and Government Operations Committee
The Honorable Chairwoman / Delegate Shane Pendergrass
Room 241
House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Hello Maryland Senate Budget and Taxation Committee and Maryland House Health and Government Operations Committee:

I write to these respectful committees for a favorable report for:

MD 2021 SB 656 / HB 874 Maryland Veterans Trust Fund – CAM for Veterans Grant Program – Established (David Perez Military Heroes Act (End 22 a Day)

My name is Chris Kirias, I am a United States Navy E-3 Seaman – Counterinsurgency Specialist – U.S. Naval Amphibious (Vet.), who served for 6 years, including time in Vietnam. I heard about Mr. Perez’s story and I wanted to help.

In 2013, the United States Department of Veterans Affairs released a report that from 1999 to 2010, tragically, 22 veterans a day in the United States were dying by suicide. This is a heartbreaking and tragic statistic about the brave men and women who have served our country.

David Perez was a Marylander, Veteran, and patriot with a big heart. He served in the United States Army for 11 years, he was a combat vet, and after he served his country, he decided to dedicate his life to helping other veterans who served with their challenges from time served in the Military. Sadly, in the Fall of 2020 David’s own challenges from his time served caught up with him, and we tragically lost him way too soon. I, as a veteran myself, have heard and known

about way too many stories like this over the years, and it is time to try and do something about this.

Our Combat veterans in Maryland and across the Country are struggling with stress, depression, and PTSD from their time served. A 2020 Baltimore Sun article reported that military suicides jumped by as much as 20% for 2020 compared to the same period in 2019. The increase is even greater for suicides among active-duty soldiers. Those deaths were up 30% in 2020, rising from 88 last year to 114 this year as a result of Covid 19 restrictions in the US.

This bill has 2 main objectives: 1. To honor the work of what Mr. Perez did, and to keep his memory, dedication, and passion for this issue alive. 2. To help our struggling veterans in the State of Maryland receive assistance for alternative forms of treatment for their time serving our country. We hope that these forms of treatment make them feel better about themselves, and raise them up, not tear them down. Our veterans in Maryland have made the ultimate sacrifice and have fought for our freedoms. Let's do all that we can in Maryland to fight for them!

That is why I respectfully ask these committees for a favorable report for **MD 2021 SB 656 / HB 874 Maryland Veterans Trust Fund – CAM for Veterans Grant Program – Established (David Perez Military Heroes Act (End 22 a Day)**

Thank You,

**Christopher Kirias
United States Navy (Vet)**