

FROM THE DESK OF

**MARK L PLASTER MD**

February 25, 2021

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

re: Support 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) Maryland Senate Budget and Taxation Committee and Maryland House Health and Government Operations Committee:

Hello:

My name is Mark Plaster, I am a former Commander in the US Navy Reserve who served for 15 years with the US Marine Corps, including two combat tours in Iraq as the head of a Shock Trauma Platoon treating frontline battlefield injuries. I live in Maryland, and have spent my time as a doctor and a veteran advocating for the brave men and women who have served our country. In 2016, while running for the US Congress, I advocated for policies to fix the broken VA system in our country. As advocating for our veterans is something near and dear to my heart, I heard about Mr Perez's story and I wanted to help.

According to a report by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs released in 2013, during a period from 1999 to 2010, tragically, 22 veterans a day in the United States were dying by suicide. This is a heartbreaking .

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. Sadly, in the fall of 2020 David's own challenges from his time served caught up with him, and we tragically lost him as well. I, as a veteran myself and a Doctor, have 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 our State receive assistance for alternative forms of treatment for PTSD. 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)

Semper fidelis,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Plaster', written in a cursive style.

Mark Plaster MD  
formerly CDR (FMF) USN