

March 1, 2021

Senate Budget and Taxation Committee

HB 874/ SB 656

**SB 656/HB 874 Maryland Veterans Trust Fund – CAM
for Veterans Grant Program – Established (David Perez
Military Heroes Act**

Testimony by Ike Puzon, Captain, USN, retired

Currently Executive Director of National War College Alumni Association, and former Co-Chair of MMC, President of Board of Directors – www.baycss.org

Delegate Pendergrass and Members of the Health and Government Operations Committee, my name is Ike Puzon,

I am the Executive Director of National War College Alumni Association, and former co-chair of the Maryland Military Coalition. Throughout my post active-duty career, I have been deeply involved in veterans' organizations representing 100s of thousands of current and former servicemembers and veterans, their families, and survivors in the State of Maryland and throughout the US. As a Board President of an agency that provides care for disabled, I am familiar with all types of disabilities.

TESTIMONY

I strongly support HB 874.

Today's former and current military members endure enormous sacrifice to support their state and our nation. Maryland has approximately 390K veterans. In 2010, studies indicated as much as 20% of military veterans have some form of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder with 22 veterans dying a day from suicide.

Those deaths are up by 30% in 2020 to 114 a day, this year.

Maryland Veterans deserve our attention and immediate action to address PTSD. The David Perez Military Heroes Act not only honors Maryland veterans, most importantly it will provide successful alternate forms of medicine and treatment. These are critical for individuals as we do not know which Complementary Alternative Medicine (CAM) will be successful, but they are necessary for success. CAMs are extremely helpful and proven in all forms of disabilities.

I urge the Committee to **FAVORABLY** report HB 874.

Thank you for this opportunity to share my views on assisting our Maryland veterans.

Respectfully submitted,

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