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**SB236 Maryland Veterans Trust Fund – CAM for Veterans Grant Program – Established  
(David Perez Military Heroes Act (End 22 a Day))**

Senate Budget and Taxation Committee

**SUPPORT**

January 25, 2022

Good Afternoon Chairman Guzzone and Members of the Budget and Taxation Committee. I am Larry Walton, Army Veteran, Member of AARP, and resident of Ocean Pines, Maryland. AARP Maryland is one of the largest membership-based organizations in the state, encompassing over 850,000 members. **AARP MD overwhelmingly supports SB236 Maryland Veterans Trust Fund – CAM for Veterans Program – Established (David Perez Military Heroes Act (End 22 a Day)).**

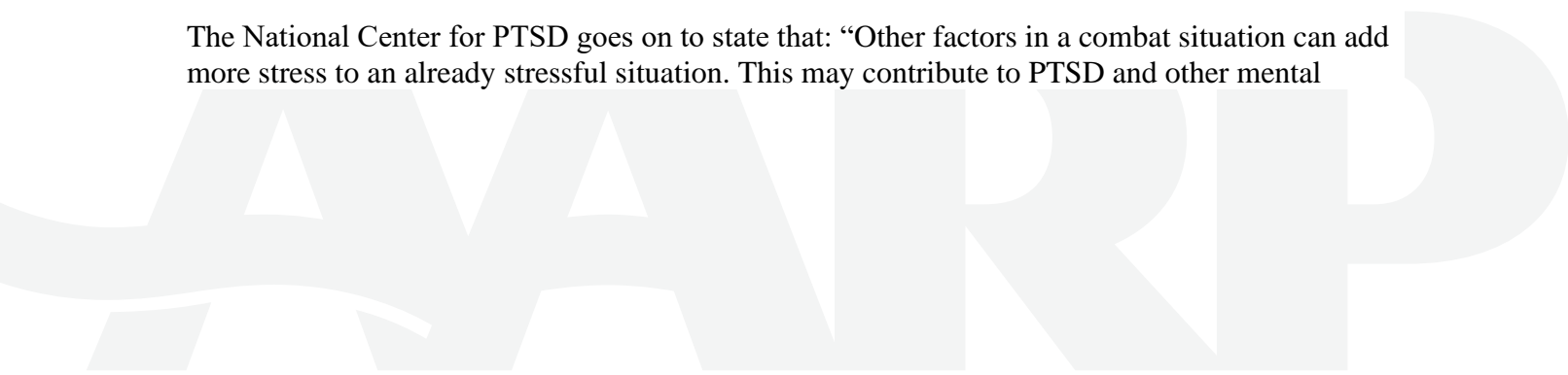
AARP is a nonpartisan, nonprofit, nationwide organization that helps people turn their goals and dreams into real possibilities, strengthens communities and fights for the issues that matter most to families such as healthcare, employment and income security, retirement planning, affordable utilities, and protection from financial abuse. Veterans comprise a significant portion of our membership and our members' families. Their wellbeing is an urgent matter.

SB236 would provide grants to veterans who are suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, depression or stress and who are needing financial assistance to find and acquire complementary and alternative medical treatments. It builds on existing law and provides for the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to adopt regulations, establish application and approval processes, as well eligibility standards for potential grant recipients.

According to the National Center for PTSD in the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, the number of Veterans with PTSD varies by service era:

- **Operations Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and Enduring Freedom (OEF):** About 11-20% of Veterans who served in OIF or OEF have PTSD in a given year.
- **Gulf War (Desert Storm):** About 12% of Gulf War Veterans have PTSD in a given year.
- **Vietnam War:** About 15% of Vietnam Veterans were currently diagnosed with PTSD at the time of the most recent study in the late 1980s, the National Vietnam Veterans Readjustment Study. It is estimated that about 30% of Vietnam Veterans have had PTSD in their lifetime.

The National Center for PTSD goes on to state that: "Other factors in a combat situation can add more stress to an already stressful situation. This may contribute to PTSD and other mental



health problems. These factors include what you do in the war, the politics around the war, where the war is fought, and the type of enemy you face.”

Military sexual trauma (MST), any sexual harassment or sexual assault that occurs in the military, also leads to PTSD and other stress disorders. MST can happen to both men and women and can occur during peacetime, training, or war.

“Among Veterans who use VA health care, about:

- 23% of women reported sexual assault when in the military; and
- 55% of women and 38% of men have experienced sexual harassment when in the military.”

These statistics are just a sampling of the mental health impacts that military service has had and continues to have on America’s Veterans. No Veteran should have to live with the long-term consequences of their service absent the support they deserve from their country and its leaders.

SB236 Honors the Service of our military Veterans as exemplified by David Perez, Army Veteran of the Iraq War. It addresses a very critical and urgent need of Veterans to access complementary and alternative health and wellness services resulting from their dedicated efforts in life-threatening situations around the world to serve and protect the interests and people of our country. We need to be there for them in their time of need, just as they were there for our country in its time of need.

We respectfully request a favorable report for Senate Bill 236. For questions or additional information, please feel free to contact Tammy Bresnahan, Associate State Director of Advocacy at [tbresnahan@arp.org](mailto:tbresnahan@arp.org) or by calling 410-302-8451.