



April 2, 2024

**Senate Bill 615
General Provisions - Commemorative Days - Maryland Veterans Suicide
Prevention Day
House Health and Government Operations Committee**

Position: Favorable

The Maryland Catholic Conference (MCC) is the public policy representative of the three (arch)dioceses serving Maryland, which together encompass over one million Marylanders. Statewide, their parishes, schools, hospitals, and numerous charities combine to form our state's second largest social service provider network, behind only our state government.

Senate Bill 615 requires the Governor to annually proclaim September 30 as Maryland Veterans Suicide Prevention Day.

Establishing a commemorative day can significantly raise awareness and support for veterans in need, emphasizing that their dedicated service is not overlooked. In 2019, Maryland reported 99 suicides among residents who had served in the Armed Forces, underscoring the challenges veterans face, including physical and emotional hardships resulting from service-related trauma or injuries.¹ It is crucial to prioritize the care of these individuals who courageously defended our nation's freedoms. Many veterans experience lasting effects, often manifested in conditions such as PTSD. Commemorative days not only enhance community awareness but also serve as opportunities for local organizations to garner economic support and expand resources.

The Catholic Conference, committed to upholding the sanctity of human life from conception to natural death, recognizes that suicide has profound impacts on individuals and their families. This bill aims to raise awareness about suicide within a population that has made significant sacrifices and deserves support in addressing this issue.

For these reasons, the MCC asks for a favorable report on **SB 615**.

Thank you for your consideration.

¹ <https://veterans.maryland.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2023/01/2022-Annual-Report-FINAL-010923.pdf>