

March 20, 2024

Chairwoman Pena Melnyk, Vice Chair Cullison, and distinguished members of the Health and Government Operations Committee,

The National Alliance on Mental Illness, Maryland and our 11 local affiliates across the state represent a statewide network of more than 58,000 families, individuals, community-based organizations, and service providers. NAMI Maryland is a non-profit that is dedicated to providing education, support, and advocacy for persons with mental illnesses, their families and the wider community.

SB412 would add an individual with experience with mental health care for veterans or an individual serving in the military to each County's mental health advisory committee.

NAMI MD recognizes that even after leaving a physical battlefield, many in the military community continue to fight mental and emotional battles. It was projected that in 2020, 362,000 veterans called Maryland home. Every day, an average of 20 veterans die by suicide.<sup>1</sup> Nearly 1 in 4 active duty members showed signs of a mental health condition.<sup>2</sup>

We strategically focus on underserved populations, including veterans and/or military personnel. People who are veterans, on active military duty, and their families, should receive the same full range of integrated diagnosis, treatment services, and support across a continuum of care as should be available to all people.

By including individual with experience in mental health care for veterans or an individual serving in the military on each county mental health advisory committee, we are ensuring that their unique needs and concerns are considered.

For these reasons, we urge a favorable report.

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<sup>1</sup> [Protecting Veterans' Access to Mental Health Care | NAMI: National Alliance on Mental Illness](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Veterans & Active Duty | NAMI: National Alliance on Mental Illness](#)