

Maryland Military Coalition SB0096 Written Testimo

Uploaded by: DAVID Dragics

Position: FAV



MARYLAND MILITARY COALITION

Serving Veterans through Legislative Advocacy

January 23, 2026

The Honorable Pamela Beidle
Chair, Finance Committee
3 East Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Subject: Request for **FAVORABLE Report** – SB0096 – Sheila E. Hixson Behavioral Health Services Matching Grant Program for Service Members and Veterans – Terminology – Active Service Members

Dear Chair Beidle and distinguished members of the Finance Committee:

On behalf of the members of the Maryland Military Coalition¹ (MMC) and as its Legislative Director, I write to recommend a **FAVORABLE report** by the Committee on ***SB0096, Sheila E. Hixson Behavioral Health Services Matching Grant Program for Service Members and Veterans – Terminology – Active Service Members***, sponsored by Senator Bryan Simonaire. This bill is a continuation of the centralization and modernization of Maryland's Code with respect to military terms, synchronizing it with the federal code related to the term "service members."

The MMC supports this bill as it corrects outdated language in Article – Health – General, § 7.5-210, subparagraphs (a) (2) (i), (a) (2) (iii), (a) (2) (iv), and (a) (2) (v); subparagraph (b) (2); and subparagraph (e) (1) (ii).

The Maryland Military Coalition **supports SB0096** and asks for a **FAVORABLE** report from the Finance Committee.

The Maryland Military Coalition is a registered non-profit, non-partisan advocacy organization comprised of 22 prominent Maryland-based veteran and military groups. It represents over 150,000 service-connected individuals, including those currently serving, veterans, retirees and their families, caregivers and survivors. Visit our website at <https://mdmilcoalition.org/>.

¹ See attached list of member organizations.

Subject: Request for FAVORABLE Report – SB0096 – Sheila E. Hixson Behavioral Health Services Matching Grant Program for Service Members and Veterans – Terminology – Active Service Members

We want to thank Senator Simonaire for sponsoring this legislation and his strong commitment to the uniformed services community in Maryland.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "David L. Dragics". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name.

David L. Dragics
COL USA (Ret)
Legislative Director



Member Organizations of the Maryland Military Coalition

Air Force Sergeants Association

American Military Society

American Minority Veterans Research Project

Association of the United States Navy

Commissioned Officers Association of the U.S. Public Health Service

Disabled American Veterans

Fleet Reserve Association of Annapolis

Jewish War Veterans of the U.S.A

Maryland Air National Guard Retirees' Association

National Active and Retired Federal Employees, Maryland Veterans

Maryland Veterans Chamber of Commerce

Military Officers Association of America

Military Order of the Purple Heart

Military Order of the World Wars

Montford Point Marines of America

National Association of Black Veterans

National Active and Retired Federal Employees, Maryland Veterans

Naval Enlisted Reserve Association

NOAA Association of Commissioned Officers

Platoon 22

Reserve Organization of America

Society of Military Widows

Veterans of Foreign Wars

2026 SB 96 Senator Simonaire_FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Kara Contino

Position: FAV

BRYAN W. SIMONAIRE
Legislative District 31
Anne Arundel County

Education, Energy, and the
Environment Committee

Joint Committee on the Chesapeake and
Atlantic Coastal Bays Critical Area



James Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street, Room 320
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-841-3658 · 301-858-3658
800-492-7122 Ext. 3658
Fax 410-841-3586 · 301-858-3586
Bryan.Simonaire@senate.state.md.us

The Senate of Maryland ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

SB 96 – Health Active-Duty Requirements

I am Senator Bryan Simonaire presenting SB 96.

I worked with the Department of Health, Military advocates and others on this **consensus** legislation.

In current law, the Sheila E. Hixson Behavioral Health Services Program for Service Members and Veterans is **only eligible** for those who are **currently serving on active duty**.

This bill simply expands the Behavioral Health Services Program to all service members, independent of active-duty status.

For one example, Uniformed Services **reservists** who have served on active-duty previously and are dealing with behavioral health issues are currently not eligible for these support programs. This bill opens those services up to **all service members** not just those currently on active duty.

Last year when I worked on the Modernization of Maryland Military Laws Act, this issue was brought up by the **Department of Health**. They discussed this issue with me requesting all service members be eligible for these services.

However, due to the sheer scope of last year's package, we decided **not** to change the underlying policies as we modernized our Military terms and structure.

One of the advantages of passing last year's bill is the **ease of changing the scope of benefits anywhere in Maryland law** due to the centralization of military terms now in the State Government Article.

Therefore, while the scope of this change will be very impactful, the change is simple.

This bill simply changes the term “Active Service Member” to “Service member”.

That is the bill and for all these reasons, I ask for your favorable consideration.

SB 96 - FIN- BHA- LOS.pdf

Uploaded by: Meghan Lynch

Position: FAV



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Wes Moore, Governor · Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor · Meena Seshamani, M.D., Ph.D., Secretary

January 27, 2026

The Honorable Pam Beidle
Chair, Senate Finance Committee
3 East Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: Senate Bill (SB) 96 – Sheila E. Hixson Behavioral Health Services Matching Grant Program for 3 Service Members and Veterans – Terminology – Active Service Members

Dear Chair Beidle and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Health (MDH) respectfully submits this letter of support as amended for Senate Bill (SB) 96 – Sheila E. Hixson Behavioral Health Services Matching Grant Program for Service Members and Veterans – Terminology – Active Service Members.

SB 96 would amend Health-General Article, 7.5–210 to remove “an active” from the conditions of eligibility for the Sheila E. Hixson Behavioral Health Services Matching Grant Program. In amending existing law, this bill broadens the eligibility for the grant program beyond active duty service members and their family members. The expanded definition aligns with Maryland’s Commitment to Veterans, which supports behavioral health coordination for all service members, veterans, and their families regardless of discharge status. In addition, by removing “active” from the eligibility definition, the eligibility is broadened to include national guardsmen as individuals serving in that capacity are only considered active if on active deployment orders.

If you would like to discuss this further, please do not hesitate to contact Meghan Lynch, Director of Government Affairs, at meghan.lynch@maryland.gov.

Sincerely,

Meena Seshamani, MD, PhD
Secretary

SB96 DVMF Support.pdf

Uploaded by: Morgan Murphy

Position: FAV



**Maryland Department of Veterans and Military Families
Office of the Secretary**

WES MOORE
GOVERNOR

ARUNA MILLER
LT. GOVERNOR

ED ROTHSTEIN
ACTING SECRETARY

**Senate Bill 96 - Sheila E. Hixson Behavioral Health Services Matching Grant Program for Service Members and Veterans - Terminology - Active Service Members
SUPPORT**

January 27, 2026

The Honorable Pamela Beidle
Finance Committee
3 East Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Chair Beidle, Vice Chair Hayes, and Committee Members,

The Maryland Department of Veterans and Military Families (DVMF) is committed to leading veterans and their families through life's transitions, making Maryland the best state for military-connected communities. Our department supports Senate Bill 96 - Sheila E. Hixson Behavioral Health Services Matching Grant Program for Service Members and Veterans - Terminology - Active Service Members.

This bill broadens the definition of "eligible individual" under the Sheila E. Hixson Behavioral Health Services Matching Grant Program for Service Members and Veterans by removing the limitation that a participant be an *active* service member or the spouse, child, or stepchild of an *active* service member.

Maryland is home to a significant military-connected population, and DVMF believes it is important to recognize and honor the service of all service members and veterans. We support the continued effort to expand eligibility, align with federal language, and modernize the veteran and military-connected definitions across the Code. There is no fiscal impact associated with this bill.

Thank you for your time, and I respectfully ask the committee for a favorable report.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Edward C. Rothstein". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Ed Rothstein
Acting Secretary