



MARYLAND MILITARY COALITION

SENATE BILL 324 – SUPPORT

Senate Bill 324 – Veterans – Behavioral Health Services – Mental Health First Aid
Senate Finance Committee
February 4, 2020

The Maryland Military Coalition is a **nonprofit, all volunteer, Veterans advocacy group** representing the interests of Maryland Veterans, Service members, and their Families. Our alliance consists of sixteen organizations, listed on the following page, with over 100,000 members. We represent about one-fourth of Maryland's Veterans, Service members, and their Families.

The Maryland Military Coalition **supports Senate Bill 324.**

As you know, this legislation implements a Mental Health First Aid program for Veterans and their families. This training program will enable Veterans and their immediate family members to identify and respond to signs of mental illness and substance abuse disorders.

Why is this so important?

- 22 Veterans die by suicide each day.
- Nearly 1 in 4 active duty members showed signs of a mental health condition according to a 2014 study by the National Alliance on Mental Illness.
- About 18.5% of Service members returning from Iraq and Afghanistan have post-traumatic stress disorder.

Sadly, due to the stigma, many Veterans with mental health problems do not seek help or delay seeking help. In fact, only 41% of the people who had a mental disorder in the past year received professional health care or other services. Even when people decide to get help, it's frequently after many years of delay. The longer a person waits to seek help, the more difficult their recovery can be. All too often, these Veterans take their lives.

Mental Health First Aid provides fantastic awareness and action-oriented training that can help address this mental health crisis, and it is widely applicable beyond the Veteran community! Please see the third page of our statement for more information on this program.

The Maryland Military Coalition believes that our Veterans are living testaments to the ideals of honor, service, and sacrifice. Consequently, we must support measures that help our Veterans and their families lead healthy, productive lives where they may enjoy the same freedoms their service and sacrifice helped guarantee for us all.

We respectfully request a favorable report for Senate Bill 324.

For questions or additional information, please feel free to contact me at
BTSmith1184@outlook.com or by calling 703.623.3678

Member Organizations, Maryland Military Coalition

James P. Monahan

Air Force Sergeants Association

Stacy P. May

American Military Society

Lynn A. Nash

**Commissioned Officers Association of the
US Public Health Service**

Wilbert B. Forbes

Disabled American Veterans

Sheldon Goldberg

Distinguished Flying Cross Association

Pleasala J. Collins

Fleet Reserve Association

Evan A. Buttrick

Jewish War Veterans of the USA

Steve L. Bloodgood

**Maryland Air National Guard Retirees'
Association**

Harvey Kaplan

Military Officers Association of America

Charles Egbert

Military Order of the Purple Heart

Mervyn Rice

National Association for Black Veterans

Michael P. Hays

Naval Enlisted Reserve Association

Christian Andreasen

NOAA Association of Commissioned Officers

Catherine L. McGraw

Society of Military Widows

Arthur L. Cooper

The Retired Enlisted Association

Thomas C. Williams

Veterans of Foreign Wars



MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID FOR VETERANS

Nearly **1 in 4** active duty members showed signs of a MENTAL HEALTH CONDITION, according to a 2014 study.

*National Alliance on Mental Illness
via JAMA Psychiatry*

20
veterans die by
SUICIDE EACH DAY.

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

About
18.5%
of service members
returning from Iraq
or Afghanistan have
post-traumatic
stress disorder
(PTSD) OR DEPRESSION.

*Substance Abuse and
Mental Health Services Administration*

Why Mental Health First Aid?

Mental Health First Aid for Veterans, Military Members and their Families teaches you **how to identify, understand and respond to signs of mental illnesses and substance use disorders.**

This 8-hour training gives you the skills you need to reach out and provide initial support to someone who may be developing a mental health or substance use problem and help connect them to appropriate care.

WHAT IT COVERS

- A discussion of military culture and its relevance to the topic of mental health.
- A discussion of the specific risk factors faced by many service members and their families such as mental and physical trauma, stress, separation, etc.
- How to break down the stigma associated with substance use disorders and mental illnesses like anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and more.
- How to reach out to those who suffer in silence, reluctant to seek help.
- Community resource information and support.

WHO SHOULD TAKE IT

- Military members
- Veterans
- Families and friends of military members or veterans

The course will teach you how to apply the ALGEE action plan:

- **Assess** for risk of suicide or harm
- **Listen** nonjudgmentally
- **Give** reassurance and information
- **Encourage** appropriate professional help
- **Encourage** self-help and other support strategies

TO FIND A COURSE OR CONTACT AN INSTRUCTOR IN YOUR AREA, VISIT
www.MentalHealthFirstAid.org OR EMAIL Info@MentalHealthFirstAid.org.



MENTAL
HEALTH
FIRST AID®

“So many people are out there wishing for something better, hoping that help will show up. That’s what Mental Health First Aid is — it is help to get people connected to care and ultimately to get them to a better place.”

—Tousha Paxton-Barnes, U.S. Army Veteran