



MARYLAND MILITARY COALITION

SUPPORT SENATE BILL 59

**Senate Bill 59 – “Slots” for Homeless Veterans Act
Senate Budget and Taxation Committee
January 9, 2020**

Good afternoon Chairman Guzzone and Members of the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee. My name is Brian Smith. I am a retired Navy Veteran from National Harbor, Maryland. I am also the volunteer Vice President of the Maryland Military Coalition, an alliance of sixteen organizations that represents over 100,000 members, about one-fourth of Maryland’s Veterans and their Families. Our member organizations are listed on the next page.

The Maryland Military Coalition **supports Senate Bill 59**, the “Slots” for Homeless Veterans Act.

This bill expands an already legal activity to allow participation in new venues. Most importantly it opens a desperately needed funding stream to both the Department of Veterans Affairs’ Maryland Veterans Trust Fund and the Division of Neighborhood Revitalization in the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD). This funding will assist these organizations in addressing and preventing homelessness for our Veterans and their families.

How many homeless Veterans are in Maryland? There are 490 homeless Veterans in Maryland based on the January 2019 Point-in-Time (PIT) estimate, available through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Who are homeless Veterans? The National Coalition for Homeless Veterans notes:

- **About 11% of the adult homeless population are veterans.** The majority are single; live in urban areas; and suffer from mental illness, alcohol and/or substance abuse, or co-occurring disorders.
- **Homeless Veterans are disproportionately African American or Hispanic.** Roughly 45% of all homeless veterans are African American or Hispanic, despite only accounting for 10.4% and 3.4% of the U.S. veteran population, respectively.
- **Nearly half of homeless veterans served during the Vietnam era.**
- **Two-thirds served at least three years, and one-third were stationed in a war zone.**

How can we address this tragedy: Veterans need a coordinated effort that provides secure housing, nutritional meals, basic physical health care, substance abuse care and aftercare, mental health counseling, personal development, and empowerment. Additionally, veterans need job assessment, training and placement assistance. Increased funding will help address these needs. **This bill will make more funding available at a low cost to the state.**

We respectfully request a favorable report for Senate Bill 59.

For questions or additional information, please feel free to contact me at
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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