



Maryland
Hospital Association

March 11, 2020

To: The Honorable Shane Pendergrass, Chairman
House Health & Government Operations Committee

From: Brian Frazee, Vice President, Government Affairs
Maryland Hospital Association

Re: Letter of Support- House Bill 1515 - Sheila E. Hixson Behavioral Health Services Matching Grant Program for Service Members and Veterans – Establishment

Dear Chairman Pendergrass:

On behalf of the Maryland Hospital Association's (MHA) 61 member hospitals and health systems, we appreciate the opportunity to comment on House Bill 1515.

Maryland is home to nearly 30,000 active-duty military personnel and about 371,000 military veterans. Research shows those who bravely serve in the military are, sadly, more likely to suffer from certain health problems, including chronic pain, substance use disorders, and mental health concerns, such as depression and post-traumatic stress.

Any of these conditions can lead to issues such as homelessness or suicide, which we know affect the veteran community.

Maryland's hospitals and health systems want to ensure those who served receive the care and support they need—during and after their service.

However, data show just over one-third of Maryland's veterans utilized the Veterans Administration health care system in 2017. Yet, we know the need is greater.

HB 1515 would expand veterans' access to care by establishing the Sheila E. Hixson Behavioral Health Services Matching Grant Program for Service Members and Veterans. The program, overseen by the Maryland Department of Health, would provide matching grants to eligible nonprofit organizations through a competitive award process.

The programs and resources funded through the grants will go a long way toward improving health outcomes for veterans in our communities.

For more information, please contact:
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