

Afghanistan and Iraq at particular risk of Post-Traumatic Stress Syndrome and related conditions, which if untreated can lead to life-long struggles with depression, substance abuse, unemployment, homelessness, and suicide; and

WHEREAS, Estimates are that more than half of veterans of the Afghanistan and Iraq conflicts return from combat zones with behavioral health problems that could compromise their successful adjustment to civilian life; and

WHEREAS, Gaps in the availability of behavioral health services and impediments to veterans' ability to access those services, particularly in the State's rural areas, may leave serious health problems untreated and exacerbate the difficulties returning veterans and their families must face; and

WHEREAS, The State is committed to identifying the behavioral health needs and gaps in services that may exist for returning veterans, and to collaborating with the United States Department of Veterans Affairs, veterans' organizations, and others to address those needs and ensure that veterans and their families receive the services they require and deserve; now, therefore,

SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND, That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

**Article - Health - General**

**SUBTITLE 27. BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES FOR MARYLAND VETERANS OF THE AFGHANISTAN AND IRAQ CONFLICTS.**

13-2701.

(A) IN THIS SUBTITLE THE FOLLOWING WORDS HAVE THE MEANINGS INDICATED.

(B) "ADJUTANT GENERAL" MEANS THE HEAD OF THE MARYLAND MILITARY DEPARTMENT.

(C) "BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES" MEANS MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES OR ALCOHOL AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE SERVICES.

(D) "CRISIS SERVICES" MEANS TEMPORARY SERVICES DESIGNED TO ADDRESS AND STABILIZE A SEVERE BEHAVIORAL HEALTH PROBLEM AND TO AVOID AN EMERGENCY SITUATION, AND MAY INCLUDE HOTLINES, IN-HOME SUPPORT, AND RESIDENTIAL CRISIS SERVICES.