

February 21, 2020

The Honorable Larry Hogan
Chair
National Governors Association
444 North Capitol Street, Suite 267
Washington, DC 20001

Re: Veterans Treatment Courts

Dear Governor Hogan:

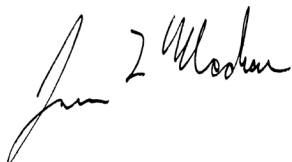
On behalf of the American Medical Association (AMA) and our physician and medical student members, I am writing regarding the AMA's support of specialized veterans courts as a method of intervention for veterans who commit criminal offenses that may be related to a neurological or psychiatric disorder.

Our members provide medical care on a daily basis to veterans suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), traumatic brain injury and other psychiatric diseases and medical trauma. PTSD can lead to distressing and persistent symptoms, including re-experiencing trauma through flashbacks or nightmares, reckless and self-destructive behavior, sudden anger and drug and alcohol abuse. These behaviors can lead to interactions with law enforcement and a criminal justice system that is ill-equipped to provide our wounded warriors the support they deserve and have earned. Just as Veterans Administration health facilities are structured to provide mental and physical care uniquely tailored to wounded veterans, the veterans courts model provides the structure and fellowship to more effectively handle criminal cases involving veterans.

Medical student members of the AMA's House of Delegates (HOD), our policy making body, developed and strongly backed a resolution supporting the veterans court model. This resolution was adopted overwhelmingly by the HOD and became AMA policy in November 2019. We have also reached out to the National Association of Drug Court Professionals urging further collaboration on this important issue.

If you have any questions, please contact Daniel Blaney-Koen, JD, Senior Legislative Attorney, AMA Advocacy Resource Center, at daniel.blaney-koen@ama-assn.org or (312) 464-4954.

Sincerely,



James L. Madara, MD

cc: MedChi, The Maryland State Medical Society
Willarda V. Edwards, MD, MBA