

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2023

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PRINCIPAL CLERK

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SENATE BILL DRS35348-MRa-116

Short Title: Mental Health Support for Military Veterans. (Public)

Sponsors: Senators Batch, Smith, and Garrett (Primary Sponsors).

Referred to:

1 A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
2 AN ACT RECOGNIZING THE SACRIFICES MADE BY MILITARY VETERANS AND
3 ADDRESSING THE MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS OF MILITARY VETERANS BY
4 ENHANCING MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES, SUPPORT NETWORKS, AND THE
5 OVERALL WELL-BEING OF VETERANS IN THIS STATE.

6 The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:
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8 **PART I. VETERAN MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT SERVICES**

9 **SECTION 1.** There is appropriated from the General Fund to the Department of
10 Health and Human Services the sum of fifty million dollars (\$50,000,000) in recurring funds for
11 the 2024-2025 fiscal year to be used to implement comprehensive programs to improve mental
12 health services and supports for military veterans that align with successful programs for military
13 veterans implemented in other states, including Texas and Virginia. Of the funds appropriated,
14 at least twenty million dollars (\$20,000,000) in recurring funds shall be allocated specifically to
15 the Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities, and Substance Use Services for
16 programs addressing mental health issues such as posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD).
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18 **PART II. INCREASED ACCESS TO MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES FOR VETERANS**

19 **SECTION 2.** There is appropriated from the General Fund to the Department of
20 Health and Human Services, Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities, and
21 Substance Use Services, the sum of fifty million dollars (\$50,000,000) in recurring funds for the
22 2024-2025 fiscal year to improve and expand veteran access to mental health services. The term
23 "mental health services" encompasses counseling, therapy, and specialized programs targeting
24 mental health issues, such as PTSD. In improving and expanding mental health services for
25 veterans, the funds appropriated in this section shall be utilized to enhance existing facilities that
26 serve military veterans, hire trained professionals with experience serving military veterans, and
27 ensure that mental health services are readily accessible to veterans across the State.
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29 **PART III. COLLABORATION WITH VETERAN ORGANIZATIONS**

30 **SECTION 3.** There is appropriated from the General Fund to the Department of
31 Military and Veterans Affairs the sum of five million dollars (\$5,000,000) in recurring funds for
32 the 2024-2025 fiscal year to provide grants to veterans' organizations in the State to help veterans
33 transition to civilian life and to manage mental health challenges experienced by veterans. Grant
34 funds may be used by the veterans' organizations to establish support networks for veterans,
35 outreach programs for veterans, and provide resources consistent with the provisions of this



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1 section to aid veterans. Priority for grants shall be given to those veterans' organizations that can
2 provide tailored assistance to veterans and foster a sense of community among veterans.
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4 **PART IV. SUICIDE PREVENTION PROGRAMS**

5 **SECTION 4.** There is appropriated from the General Fund to the Department of
6 Health and Human Services, Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities, and
7 Substance Use Services, the sum of ten million dollars (\$10,000,000) in recurring funds for the
8 2024-2025 fiscal year to be used for suicide prevention programs specifically designed for
9 military veterans, including the establishment of a crisis helpline, outreach efforts, and mental
10 health education campaigns. The Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities, and
11 Substance Use Services shall coordinate with relevant agencies and organizations to ensure the
12 effectiveness of these programs.
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14 **PART V. EMPLOYMENT AND TRANSITION SUPPORT**

15 **SECTION 5.** There is appropriated from the General Fund to the Department of
16 Commerce the sum of ten million dollars (\$10,000,000) in recurring funds for the 2024-2025
17 fiscal year to develop programs that will help veterans in the State find gainful employment or
18 start their own businesses. The goal of these programs shall be to help veterans transition to
19 civilian life by providing them with the means to provide financially for themselves and their
20 families, and thereby reducing veteran homelessness and social isolation, among other concerns.
21 The Department of Commerce shall, in collaboration with the Department of Military and
22 Veterans Affairs, develop the programs described in this section.
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24 **PART VI. EFFECTIVE DATE**

25 **SECTION 6.** This act becomes effective July 1, 2024.