



Sen. Thomas Cullerton

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LRB100 08180 MJP 26950 a

1 AMENDMENT TO HOUSE BILL 2647

2 AMENDMENT NO. _____. Amend House Bill 2647 by replacing
3 everything after the enacting clause with the following:

4 "Section 5. The Department of Veterans Affairs Act is
5 amended by adding Section 2h as follows:

6 (20 ILCS 2805/2h new)

7 Sec. 2h. Task Force on Veterans' Suicide recommendations.

8 The provisions of this Section are based on the recommendations
9 in the final report of the Task Force on Veterans' Suicide,
10 published on December 1, 2016. The Department shall adopt any
11 rules necessary to implement this Section. The Department shall
12 seek available federal funding, grants, or private funding to
13 help fund the requirements of this Section; or the Department
14 shall collaborate with other departments, existing veterans'
15 organizations, nonprofit organizations, or private
16 organizations to implement the requirements of this Section.

1 (1) The Department shall reach out and coordinate with
2 the United States Department of Veterans' Affairs in order
3 to identify veterans returning from service in combat
4 units. The Department shall establish a proactive outreach
5 program for veterans that served in combat units.

6 (2) The Department or the Department in collaboration
7 with not-for-profit organizations shall engage in a public
8 awareness campaign concerning the trauma and internal
9 injuries suffered by veterans in order to promote
10 understanding and acceptance from the general public. The
11 public awareness campaign shall work to dispel the myths
12 associated with grieving, suicide, and mental health
13 healing. The Department shall evaluate existing programs,
14 including, but not limited to, the Suicide Prevention
15 Alliance under the Suicide Prevention, Education, and
16 Treatment Act, and coordinate messaging using messaging
17 guidelines that existing programs have found to be
18 successful.

19 (3) The Department shall provide training to frontline
20 employees at veterans service organizations established
21 under this Act on mental health services to identify
22 veterans who might be at risk of suicidal thoughts. This
23 training may include, but not be limited to, mental health
24 first aid training and amplified suicide advanced training
25 programs. The Department shall provide assistance to
26 Veterans Assistance Commissions established under Section

1 9 of the Military Veterans Assistance Act and veterans'
2 service associations, including, but not limited to, the
3 American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, and AMVETS, in
4 providing the training under this paragraph to the
5 employees of the Veterans Assistance Commissions and
6 veterans' service associations that seek participation in
7 the Department's training events.

8 The Department shall have priority for hiring combat
9 veterans to serve as veteran service officers at veterans
10 service organizations established under this Act for the
11 purpose of having veteran services officers who are able to
12 properly relate to fellow combat veterans.

13 (4) The Department shall collaborate with institutions
14 of higher education to address environmental factors that
15 could negatively impact a veteran's ability to learn in a
16 traditional classroom setting. The Department, in
17 coordination with institutions of higher education, shall
18 provide proactive outreach as part of an educational
19 success program for veterans experiencing difficulties in
20 higher education.

21 (5) The Department shall coordinate with existing
22 veterans' associations and military organizations to
23 provide a family preparation course concerning the
24 emotional cycle of deployment that is designed to help a
25 family unit adjust to changes in discharged and returning
26 veterans and inform the family members of where to go to

1 seek assistance. This course shall be made available to the
2 family of a veteran prior to the discharge and homecoming
3 of the veteran.

4 (6) The Department shall reach out to the United States
5 Department of Veterans' Affairs to obtain information on
6 returning veterans and develop a transition program for
7 returning veterans that reside in the State including
8 information on local organizations that provide resources
9 or services for veterans that a veteran can access.

10 (7) The Department shall collaborate with non-profits,
11 businesses, and employers in the State that focus on the
12 needs of employees who are veterans seeking employment and
13 that support employees who are veterans.

14 (8) The Department, in collaboration with veterans'
15 organizations in the State, shall coordinate with the
16 United States Department of Veterans' Affairs to promote
17 their peer specialist program and collaborate with outside
18 programs to establish a peer-to-peer program."