

WEST VIRGINIA LEGISLATURE

2022 REGULAR SESSION

Introduced

Senate Bill 598

BY SENATORS BLAIR (MR. PRESIDENT) AND BALDWIN

(BY REQUEST OF THE EXECUTIVE)

[Introduced February 09, 2022; referred
to the Committee on Military]

1 A BILL to amend the Code of West Virginia, 1931, as amended, by adding thereto a new article,
 2 designated §9A-5-1, §9A-5-2, and §9A-5-3, all relating to specifically authorizing programs
 3 to assist at-risk veterans through partnerships with service organizations engaged with
 4 their local veteran communities to connect veterans and their families with existing
 5 resources to combat suicide, and its contributing factors, among the veteran population in
 6 this state; providing legislative fundings and purpose; authorizing programs to assist at-
 7 risk veterans through partnerships with service organizations to combat suicide and its
 8 contributing factors among the veteran population; and providing for funding and grant-
 9 making from the Department of Veterans' Assistance to partner service organizations and
 10 for the purposes of this article.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of West Virginia:

ARTICLE 5. AID TO AT-RISK VETERANS.

§9A-5-1. Legislative finding and purpose.

1 (a) The Legislature hereby finds that there exists a health care crisis among our state's
 2 veterans and their families, with veterans in this state dying by suicide at a rate of nearly 60
 3 percent higher than the rate for nonveterans.

4 (b) The Legislature finds that there are significant resources available to help combat this
 5 crisis, but that these resources are not well-known or easily available to veterans and their
 6 families.

7 (c) Therefore, the Legislature hereby specifically authorizes and directs the Department
 8 of Veterans' Assistance to develop and implement programs to assist at-risk veterans, including
 9 by establishing partnerships with service organizations engaged with their local veteran
 10 communities to connect veterans and their families with existing resources to combat suicide, and
 11 its contributing factors, among the veteran population in this state.

§9A-5-2. Assistance to At-Risk Veterans; Partnerships with Service Organizations.

1 (a) In addition to the duties and powers otherwise provided to the Department of Veterans'

2 Assistance under this chapter, the department shall develop and implement programs to assist
3 veterans and their families combat suicide and its contributing factors in this state.

4 (b) The department may enter into partnerships or agreements with services organizations
5 engaged with their local veteran communities to provide or connect veterans and their families to
6 resources that may be available through any source, including state, federal, or private resources.

§9A-5-3. Grant-making Authority.

1 (a) The Department of Veterans' Assistance may make grants or otherwise transfer
2 moneys held by the department from any available source to provide assistance to veterans or
3 their families, including by providing funding to partner service organizations, for the purposes of
4 this article.

5 (b) The department shall maintain records of any moneys transferred or expended under
6 this article, and shall comply with all relevant reporting requirements.

NOTE: The purpose of this bill is to direct the Department of Veterans Affairs to establish partnerships with service organizations engaged with their local veteran communities to connect veterans and their families with existing resources to combat suicide, and its contributing factors, among the veteran population in this state.

Strike-throughs indicate language that would be stricken from a heading or the present law, and underscoring indicates new language that would be added.