

114TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R. 4684

To amend title 38, United States Code, to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to furnish mental health care to certain former members of the Armed Forces who are not otherwise eligible to receive such care, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MARCH 3, 2016

Mr. COFFMAN (for himself, Mr. KILMER, and Miss RICE of New York) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs

A BILL

To amend title 38, United States Code, to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to furnish mental health care to certain former members of the Armed Forces who are not otherwise eligible to receive such care, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Veteran Urgent Access
5 to Mental Healthcare Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. EXPANSION OF INITIAL AND URGENT MENTAL**
2 **HEALTH CARE FOR CERTAIN FORMER MEM-**
3 **BERS OF THE ARMED FORCES.**

4 (a) IN GENERAL.—Chapter 17 of title 38, United
5 States Code, is amended by inserting after section 1720G
6 the following new section:

7 **“§ 1720H. Provision of initial and urgent mental**
8 **health care for certain former members**
9 **not otherwise eligible for care**

10 “(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall operate a
11 program under which the Secretary provides to former
12 members of the Armed Forces described in subsection
13 (b)—

14 “(1) an initial mental health assessment; and
15 “(2) any health care services authorized under
16 this chapter that the Secretary determines are re-
17 quired to treat the urgent mental health care needs
18 of the former member, including risk of suicide or
19 harming others.

20 “(b) FORMER MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES
21 DESCRIBED.—A former member of the Armed Forces de-
22 scribed in this subsection is an individual who meets either
23 of the following criteria:

24 “(1) The individual is a former member of the
25 Armed Forces, including the reserve components,
26 who—

1 “(A) served in the active military, naval, or
2 air service, and was discharged or released
3 therefrom under a condition that is not honor-
4 able except—

5 “(i) dishonorable; or

6 “(ii) bad conduct by reason of the
7 sentence of a general court martial;

8 “(B) has applied for a character of service
9 determination and such determination has not
10 been made; and

11 “(C) is not otherwise eligible to enroll in
12 the health care system established by section
13 1705 of this title by reason of such discharge
14 or release not meeting the requirements of sec-
15 tion 101(2) of this title.

16 “(2) The individual is a veteran described in
17 section 1705(a)(8) of this title.

18 “(c) CONTRACT.—In furnishing mental health care
19 services to an individual under this section, the Secretary
20 may provide such mental health care services pursuant to
21 a contract with a qualified mental health professional if—

22 “(1) in the judgment of a mental health profes-
23 sional employed by the Department, the receipt of
24 mental health care services by that individual in fa-

1 facilities of the Department would be clinically inadvis-
2 able; or

3 “(2) facilities of the Department are not capa-
4 ble of furnishing such mental health care services to
5 that individual economically because of geographical
6 inaccessibility.

7 “(d) TRAINING.—In establishing a program to pro-
8 vide mental health care services under subsection (a), the
9 Secretary shall—

10 “(1) provide for appropriate training of mental
11 health professionals and such other health care per-
12 sonnel as the Secretary determines necessary to
13 carry out the program effectively;

14 “(2) seek to ensure that such mental health
15 care services is furnished in a setting that is thera-
16apeutically appropriate, taking into account the cir-
17cumstances that resulted in the need for such men-
18tal health care services; and

19 “(3) provide referral services to assist former
20 members who are not eligible for services under this
21 chapter to obtain those from sources outside the De-
22partment.

23 “(e) INFORMATION.—The Secretary shall provide in-
24formation on the mental health care services available

1 under this section. Efforts by the Secretary to provide
2 such information—

3 “(1) shall include availability of a toll-free tele-
4 phone number (commonly referred to as an 800
5 number);

6 “(2) shall ensure that information about the
7 mental health care services available under this sec-
8 tion—

9 “(A) is revised and updated as appro-
10 priate;

11 “(B) is made available and visibly posted
12 at appropriate facilities of the Department; and

13 “(C) is made available through appropriate
14 public information services; and

15 “(3) shall include coordination with the Sec-
16 retary of Defense seeking to ensure that members of
17 the Armed Forces and individuals who are being
18 separated from active military, naval, or air service
19 are provided appropriate information about pro-
20 grams, requirements, and procedures for applying
21 for mental health care services under this section.

22 “(f) ANNUAL REPORTS.—Each year, the Secretary
23 shall submit to Congress an annual report on the mental
24 health care services provided pursuant to this section.

1 Each report shall include data for the year covered by the
2 report with respect to each of the following:

3 “(1) The number of individuals who received
4 mental health care services under subsection (a),
5 disaggregated by the number of men who received
6 such services and the number of women who re-
7 ceived such services.

8 “(2) Such other information as the Secretary
9 considers appropriate.”.

10 (b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections
11 at the beginning of chapter 17 of title 38, United States
12 Code, is amended by inserting after the item relating to
13 section 1720G the following new item:

 “1720H. Provision of initial and urgent mental health care not otherwise eligible
 for care.”.

14 (c) STUDY ON EFFECT OF COMBAT SERVICE ON SUI-
15 CIDE RATES.—

16 (1) STUDY.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs,
17 in consultation with the Secretary of Defense, shall
18 seek to enter into a contract with an independent
19 nongovernmental entity to carry out a study on the
20 effect combat service has had on suicide rates and
21 serious mental health issues among veterans. To the
22 extent practicable, such study shall—

23 (A) compare the rate and method of sui-
24 cides among veterans who have received mental

1 health care services from the Veterans Health
2 Administration and veterans who have not re-
3 ceived such services from the Veterans Health
4 Administration; and

5 (B) compare the rate and method of sui-
6 cides and the incidence of serious mental health
7 issues among veterans who have served in com-
8 bat and veterans who have not served in com-
9 bat.

10 (2) REPORT.—Not later than one year after the
11 date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of
12 Veterans Affairs shall submit to Congress a report
13 containing the study conducted under paragraph (1).

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