



Legislation Text

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Res. No. 837

Resolution calling on the New York State Legislature to pass, and the Governor to sign, S.4717/A.3149, to authorize the New York State Department of Veterans' Services to provide eligible veterans with financial assistance for purchasing, training, and the upkeep of service dogs and emotional support dogs.

By Council Members Holden, Gutiérrez, Louis, Stevens, Hanif, Farías, Avilés, Velázquez, Ariola, Cabán, Won, Gennaro, Paladino and Vernikov

Whereas, According to the United States (U.S.) Department of Veterans Affairs, as of September 2022, there were over 18.5 million veterans in the U.S.; and

Whereas, The New York State Department of Health (NYS DOH) estimated that as of 2021, there were 968,528 veterans in New York State (NYS), representing 6.1 percent of the state's adult population; and

Whereas, Per the NYS DOH, in New York City, as of 2021, there were 282,664 veterans, accounting for 4.2 percent of the city's adult residents; and

Whereas, The impacts of military service on psychological health are complex, and as a result, veterans tend to suffer from substance and alcohol use/misuse, military sexual trauma, behavioral issues, and mental health disorders, including Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), at higher rates than non-veterans; and

Whereas, According to the 2021 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) report on veterans' health by the NYS DOH, veterans in NYS experience a higher prevalence of disabilities than non-veterans; and

Whereas, Thus, per the NYS DOH, in 2021, 37 percent of veterans in NYS reported at least one disability in contrast with 25.9 percent of non-veterans; and

Whereas, Moreover, as of 2021, the rates of smoking were higher among veterans than non-veterans in NYS, at 14.9 percent and 11.9 percent, respectively, and contrasted with 12 percent among all adults in the

state; and

Whereas, Furthermore, as of 2021, 14.6 percent of veterans in NYS were engaging in binge or heavy drinking, and the prevalence of this problem was even higher among veterans aged 18 to 64 years, at 22.3 percent; and

Whereas, Also, in 2021, 9.3 percent of veterans in NYS reported poor self-assessed mental health; and

Whereas, Additionally, during 2021, 14.4 percent of veterans in NYS had a depressive disorder diagnosis, and this rate was elevated among veterans between the ages of 18 and 64 years, at 18.3 percent; and

Whereas, According to an October 2021 report by the New York State Health Foundation, data collected between 2015 and 2018 revealed that approximately 10 percent of veterans in NYS reported ever receiving treatment for substance or alcohol use/misuse, which was double the rate among non-veterans of 5 percent; and

Whereas, Per the same 2021 report by the New York State Health Foundation, survey data from 2015 to 2018 showed that about 6 percent of veterans in NYS experienced serious psychological distress in the past 12 months; and

Whereas, In addition, 20 percent of veterans in NYS reported feeling sad, empty, or depressed for several days or longer; and

Whereas, The New York State Health Foundation's 2021 report also highlighted that the incidence of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) among veterans was double the rate as among non-veterans, at 12.9 percent and 6.8 percent, respectively; and

Whereas, Moreover, the New York State Health Foundation stressed that in 2019, 156 veterans died by suicide in NYS, and that compared with the general population in the state, veterans die by suicide at a much higher proportion-at twice the non-veterans' rate in 2019; and

Whereas, According to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), in 2020, 143 veterans died by suicide in NYS, representing the rate of 19.2 per 100,000 veterans and contrasted with the state's general population's rate of 10.5 per 100,000 NYS residents; and

Whereas, A meta-review of research on benefits and efficacy of Animal-Assisted Therapies (AAT) cited by the VA demonstrates that AAT can be an effective treatment for mental, mood, and behavioral disorders, including PTSD, anxiety, depression, schizophrenia, and alcohol and substance use/misuse, can increase social engagement and improve quality of life, self-efficacy, and ability to cope, as well as can yield significant therapeutic benefits for people with acquired brain injury and cognitive impairment; and

Whereas, The VA's 2015 Healthcare Analysis Information Group survey found that 52 percent of VA healthcare systems offer AAT for veterans, an increase from 25 percent in 2011; and

Whereas, To meet veterans' therapeutic need for AAT, State Senator James Sanders Jr. introduced S.4717 in the NYS Senate, and Assembly Member Pamela J. Hunter introduced companion bill A.3149 in the NYS Assembly, which would authorize the NYS Department of Veterans' Services to provide eligible veterans with financial assistance for purchasing, training, and the upkeep of service dogs and emotional support dogs; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York calls on the New York State Legislature to pass, and the Governor to sign, S.4717/A.3149, to authorize the New York State Department of Veterans' Services to provide eligible veterans with financial assistance for purchasing, training, and the upkeep of service dogs and emotional support dogs.

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