

117TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 1296

To require a pilot program on activities under the Transition Assistance Program for a reduction in suicide among veterans, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

APRIL 21, 2021

Mr. BROWN (for himself, Ms. ERNST, Mr. WHITEHOUSE, and Mr. BLUMENTHAL) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs

A BILL

To require a pilot program on activities under the Transition Assistance Program for a reduction in suicide among veterans, 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 “Daniel J. Harvey Jr.
5 and Adam Lambert Improving Servicemember Transition
6 to Reduce Veteran Suicide Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. PILOT PROGRAM ON ACTIVITIES UNDER THE TRAN-**
2 **SITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM FOR A REDUC-**
3 **TION IN SUICIDE AMONG VETERANS.**

4 (a) PILOT PROGRAM REQUIRED.—The Secretary of
5 Defense and the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall jointly
6 carry out a pilot program to assess the feasibility and ad-
7 visability of providing the module described in subsection
8 (b) and the services described in subsection (c) as part
9 of the Transition Assistance Program for members of the
10 Armed Forces participating in the Transition Assistance
11 Program as a means of reducing the incidence of suicide
12 among veterans.

13 (b) MODULE.—The module described in this sub-
14 section is a three-hour module under the Transition As-
15 sistance Program for each member of the Armed Forces
16 participating in the pilot program that includes the fol-
17 lowing:

18 (1) An in-person meeting between the cohort of
19 the member and a social worker in which the social
20 worker—

21 (A) counsels the cohort on specific poten-
22 tial risks confronting members after discharge
23 or release from the Armed Forces, including
24 loss of community or a support system, isola-
25 tion from family, friends, or society, identity
26 crisis in the transition from military to civilian

1 life, vulnerability viewed as a weakness, need
2 for empathy, self-medication and addiction, im-
3 portance of sleep and exercise, homelessness,
4 and reasons why veterans attempt and complete
5 suicide;

6 (B) counsels members of the cohort who
7 have been diagnosed with physical, psycho-
8 logical, or neurological issues, such as post-
9 traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain in-
10 jury, adverse childhood experiences, depression,
11 and bipolar disorder, on—

12 (i) the potential risks for such mem-
13 bers from such issues after discharge or
14 release; and

15 (ii) the resources and treatment op-
16 tions afforded to members for such issues
17 through the Department of Veterans Af-
18 fairs, the Department of Defense, and non-
19 profit organizations;

20 (C) counsels the cohort about the resources
21 afforded to victims of military sexual trauma
22 through the Department of Veterans Affairs;
23 and

24 (D) counsels the cohort about the five
25 stages of grieving, the manner in which mem-

1 bers might experience grieving during the tran-
2 sition from military to civilian life, and the re-
3 sources afforded to them for grieving through
4 the Department of Veterans Affairs.

5 (2) The provision to each cohort member of
6 contact information for a counseling or other appro-
7 priate facility of the Department of Veterans Affairs
8 in the locality in which such member intends to re-
9 side after discharge or release.

10 (3) The submittal by cohort members to the
11 Department of Veterans Affairs (including both the
12 Veterans Health Administration and the Veterans
13 Benefits Administration) of their medical records in
14 connection with service in the Armed Forces, wheth-
15 er or not such members intend to file a claim with
16 the Department for benefits with respect to any
17 service-connected disability.

18 (c) SERVICES.—The services described in this sub-
19 section in connection with the Transition Assistance Pro-
20 gram for each member of the Armed Forces participating
21 in the pilot program are the following:

22 (1) Not later than 90 days after the discharge
23 or release of the member from the Armed Forces, a
24 contact of the member by a social worker or behav-
25 ioral health coordinator from the Department of

1 Veterans Affairs to schedule a follow-up appoint-
2 ment with a social worker or behavioral health pro-
3 vider at the facility applicable to the member under
4 subsection (b)(2) to occur not later than 90 days
5 after such contact.

6 (2) During the appointment scheduled pursuant
7 to paragraph (1)—

8 (A) an assessment of the member to deter-
9 mine the experiences of the member with events
10 during service in the Armed Forces that could
11 lead, whether individually or cumulatively, to
12 physical, psychological, or neurological issues,
13 including issues described in subsection
14 (b)(1)(B); and

15 (B) the development of a medical treat-
16 ment plan for the member, including treatment
17 for issues identified pursuant to the assessment
18 under subparagraph (A).

19 (d) LOCATIONS.—

20 (1) IN GENERAL.—The pilot program shall be
21 carried out at not fewer than 10 Transition Assist-
22 ance Centers of the Department of Defense that
23 serve not fewer than 300 members of the Armed
24 Forces annually that are jointly selected by the Sec-

1 retary of Defense and the Secretary of Veterans Af-
2 fairs for purposes of the pilot program.

3 (2) MEMBERS SERVED.—The centers selected
4 under paragraph (1) shall, to the extent practicable,
5 be centers that, whether individually or in aggregate,
6 serve all the Armed Forces and both the regular and
7 reserve components of the Armed Forces.

8 (e) SELECTION AND COMMENCEMENT.—The Sec-
9 retary of Defense and the Secretary of Veterans Affairs
10 shall jointly select the locations of the pilot program under
11 subsection (d)(1) and commence carrying out activities
12 under the pilot program by not later than 120 days after
13 the date of the enactment of this Act.

14 (f) DURATION.—

15 (1) IN GENERAL.—The duration of the pilot
16 program shall be five years.

17 (2) CONTINUATION.—If the Secretary of De-
18 fense and the Secretary of Veterans Affairs rec-
19 ommend in the report under subsection (g) that the
20 pilot program be extended beyond the date otherwise
21 provided by paragraph (1), the Secretaries may
22 jointly continue the pilot program for such period
23 beyond such date as the Secretaries jointly consider
24 appropriate.

25 (g) REPORTS.—

1 (1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than one year
2 after the date of the enactment of this Act, and
3 every 180 days thereafter during the duration of the
4 pilot program, the Secretary of Defense and the Sec-
5 retary of Veterans Affairs shall jointly submit to
6 Congress a report on the activities under the pilot
7 program.

8 (2) ELEMENTS.—Each report required by para-
9 graph (1) shall include the following:

10 (A) A description of the members of the
11 Armed Forces who participated in the pilot pro-
12 gram during the 180-day period ending on the
13 date of such report, broken out by the fol-
14 lowing:

15 (i) Sex.

16 (ii) Branch of the Armed Forces in
17 which served.

18 (iii) Diagnosis of, or other symptoms
19 consistent with, military sexual trauma,
20 post-traumatic stress disorder, traumatic
21 brain injury, depression, or bipolar dis-
22 order in connection with service in the
23 Armed Forces.

24 (B) A description of the activities under
25 the pilot program during such period.

1 (C) An assessment of the benefits of the
2 activities under the pilot program during such
3 period to veterans and family members of vet-
4 erans.

5 (D) An assessment whether the activities
6 under the pilot program as of the date of such
7 report have reduced the incidence of suicide
8 among members who participated in the pilot
9 program within one year of discharge or release
10 from the Armed Forces.

11 (E) Such recommendations as the Sec-
12 retary of Defense and the Secretary of Veterans
13 Affairs jointly consider appropriate regarding
14 expansion of the pilot program, extension of the
15 pilot program, or both.

16 (h) TRANSITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM DEFINED.—
17 In this section, the term “Transition Assistance Program”
18 means the program of assistance and other transitional
19 services carried out pursuant to section 1144 of title 10,
20 United States Code.

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