

116TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. 4900

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

NOVEMBER 16, 2020

Mr. BROWN (for himself, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Ms. ERNST, and Mr. WHITEHOUSE) 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 3-hour module under the Transition Assist-
15 ance Program for each member participating in the pilot
16 program that includes the following:

17 (1) An in-person meeting between the member's
18 cohort and a social worker in which the social work-
19 er—

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

1 for empathy, self-medication and addiction, im-
2 portance of sleep and exercise, homelessness,
3 and reasons why veterans attempt and complete
4 suicide;

5 (B) counsels members of the cohort who
6 have been diagnosed with physical, psycho-
7 logical, or neurological issues, such as Post-
8 Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Traumatic
9 Brain Injury (TBI), Adverse Childhood Experi-
10 ences (ACE), depression, and bipolar disorder,
11 on—

12 (i) the potential risks for such mem-
13 bers after discharge or release from such
14 issues; 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 (MST) through the Department of Veterans Af-
23 fairs; 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 member medical records
14 in connection with service in the Armed Forces,
15 whether or not such members intends to file a claim
16 with 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 participating in the pilot program
21 are the following:

22 (1) Not later than 90 days after the discharge
23 or release of the member, a contact of the member
24 by a social worker or behavioral health coordinator
25 from the Department of Veterans Affairs to schedule

1 a follow-up appointment with a social worker or be-
2 havioral health provider at the facility applicable to
3 the member under subsection (b)(2), which such ap-
4 pointment to occur not later than 90 days after such
5 contact.

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

8 (A) an assessment of the member to deter-
9 mine the member's experiences with events dur-
10 ing military service that could lead, whether in-
11 dividually or cumulatively, to physical, psycho-
12 logical, or neurological issues, including issues
13 described in subsection (b)(1)(B); and

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

18 (d) LOCATIONS.—The pilot program shall be carried
19 out at not fewer than 10 Transition Assistance Centers
20 of the Department of Defense that serve at least 300
21 members annually, which centers shall be jointly selected
22 by the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of Veterans
23 Affairs for purposes of the pilot program. The centers so
24 selected shall, to the extent practicable, be centers that,
25 whether individually or in aggregate, serve all the Armed

1 Forces and both the regular and reserve components of
2 the Armed Forces.

3 (e) SELECTION AND COMMENCEMENT.—The Sec-
4 retary of Defense and the Secretary of Veterans Affairs
5 shall jointly select the locations of the pilot program under
6 subsection (d), and commence carrying out activities
7 under the pilot program, by not later than 120 days after
8 the date of the enactment of this Act.

9 (f) DURATION.—

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

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

20 (g) REPORTS.—

21 (1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than one year
22 after the date of the enactment of this Act, and
23 every 180 days thereafter during the duration of the
24 pilot program, the Secretary of Defense and the Sec-
25 retary of Veterans Affairs shall jointly submit to

1 Congress a report on the activities under the pilot
2 program.

3 (2) ELEMENTS.—Each report on the pilot pro-
4 gram under this subsection shall include the fol-
5 lowing:

6 (A) A description of the members who par-
7 ticipated in the pilot program during the 180-
8 day period ending on the date of such report,
9 broken out by the following:

10 (i) Sex.

11 (ii) Branch of the Armed Forces in
12 which served.

13 (iii) Diagnosis of, or other symptoms
14 consistent with, Military Sexual Trauma
15 (MST), Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
16 (PTSD), Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI),
17 depression, or bipolar disorder in connec-
18 tion with military service.

19 (B) A description of the activities under
20 the pilot program during such period.

21 (C) An assessment of the benefits of the
22 activities under the pilot program during such
23 period to veterans and family members of vet-
24 erans.

1 (D) An assessment whether the activities
2 under the pilot program as of the date of such
3 report have reduced the incidence of suicide
4 among members who participated in the pilot
5 program, within one year of discharge or re-
6 lease from the Armed Forces.

7 (E) Such recommendations as the Sec-
8 retary of Defense and the Secretary of Veterans
9 Affairs jointly consider appropriate regarding
10 expansion of the pilot program, extension of the
11 pilot program, or both.

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

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