

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2023**

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SENATE BILL 837

Short Title: Mental Health Support for Military Veterans. (Public)

Sponsors: Senators Batch, Smith, and Garrett (Primary Sponsors).

Referred to: Rules and Operations of the Senate

May 6, 2024

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT RECOGNIZING THE SACRIFICES MADE BY MILITARY VETERANS AND ADDRESSING THE MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS OF MILITARY VETERANS BY ENHANCING MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES, SUPPORT NETWORKS, AND THE OVERALL WELL-BEING OF VETERANS IN THIS STATE.

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

PART I. VETERAN MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT SERVICES

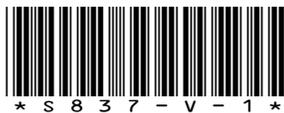
SECTION 1. There is appropriated from the General Fund to the Department of Health and Human Services the sum of fifty million dollars (\$50,000,000) in recurring funds for the 2024-2025 fiscal year to be used to implement comprehensive programs to improve mental health services and supports for military veterans that align with successful programs for military veterans implemented in other states, including Texas and Virginia. Of the funds appropriated, at least twenty million dollars (\$20,000,000) in recurring funds shall be allocated specifically to the Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities, and Substance Use Services for programs addressing mental health issues such as posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

PART II. INCREASED ACCESS TO MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES FOR VETERANS

SECTION 2. There is appropriated from the General Fund to the Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities, and Substance Use Services, the sum of fifty million dollars (\$50,000,000) in recurring funds for the 2024-2025 fiscal year to improve and expand veteran access to mental health services. The term "mental health services" encompasses counseling, therapy, and specialized programs targeting mental health issues, such as PTSD. In improving and expanding mental health services for veterans, the funds appropriated in this section shall be utilized to enhance existing facilities that serve military veterans, hire trained professionals with experience serving military veterans, and ensure that mental health services are readily accessible to veterans across the State.

PART III. COLLABORATION WITH VETERAN ORGANIZATIONS

SECTION 3. There is appropriated from the General Fund to the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs the sum of five million dollars (\$5,000,000) in recurring funds for the 2024-2025 fiscal year to provide grants to veterans' organizations in the State to help veterans transition to civilian life and to manage mental health challenges experienced by veterans. Grant funds may be used by the veterans' organizations to establish support networks for veterans, outreach programs for veterans, and provide resources consistent with the provisions of this



1 section to aid veterans. Priority for grants shall be given to those veterans' organizations that can
2 provide tailored assistance to veterans and foster a sense of community among veterans.
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4 **PART IV. SUICIDE PREVENTION PROGRAMS**

5 **SECTION 4.** There is appropriated from the General Fund to the Department of
6 Health and Human Services, Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities, and
7 Substance Use Services, the sum of ten million dollars (\$10,000,000) in recurring funds for the
8 2024-2025 fiscal year to be used for suicide prevention programs specifically designed for
9 military veterans, including the establishment of a crisis helpline, outreach efforts, and mental
10 health education campaigns. The Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities, and
11 Substance Use Services shall coordinate with relevant agencies and organizations to ensure the
12 effectiveness of these programs.
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14 **PART V. EMPLOYMENT AND TRANSITION SUPPORT**

15 **SECTION 5.** There is appropriated from the General Fund to the Department of
16 Commerce the sum of ten million dollars (\$10,000,000) in recurring funds for the 2024-2025
17 fiscal year to develop programs that will help veterans in the State find gainful employment or
18 start their own businesses. The goal of these programs shall be to help veterans transition to
19 civilian life by providing them with the means to provide financially for themselves and their
20 families, and thereby reducing veteran homelessness and social isolation, among other concerns.
21 The Department of Commerce shall, in collaboration with the Department of Military and
22 Veterans Affairs, develop the programs described in this section.
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24 **PART VI. EFFECTIVE DATE**

25 **SECTION 6.** This act becomes effective July 1, 2024.