

SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE FISCAL NOTE

BILL NO. Senate Bill 447

PRINTER NO. 370

AMOUNT

No Fiscal Impact

FUND

General Fund

DATE INTRODUCED

February 24, 2023

PRIME SPONSOR

Senator Mastriano

DESCRIPTION

Senate Bill 447 amends Title 51 (Military Affairs) of the Pennsylvania Consolidated Statutes by adding a new section to establish the PA VETConnect Program.

Section 714 establishes the PA VETConnect Program and provides that the program may include the following participants:

- Federal agencies;
- State agencies;
- County directors of veterans' affairs;
- Veterans' service organizations;
- Accredited postsecondary educational and technical institutions;
- The healthcare provider community; and
- Businesses and nonprofit organizations.

The legislation provides that the purpose of the program shall be:

- 1) To improve the health and well-being of veterans and the families of veterans through referrals, community engagement and consistent network communication; and
- 2) To organize participants to cooperate with network partners to provide for proactive solutions to address the problems faced by veterans.

Program requirements shall be determined by the Department of Military & Veterans Affairs (department), which shall disseminate information to the greatest extent possible on how to best navigate and utilize available resources.

The department shall develop the program, which shall contain a mission statement that shall be clearly communicated to network advocates, partners and participants. Specifically, the department shall:

- 1) Coordinate with participants that provide programs, initiatives, reintegration outreach and related services to veterans and families of veterans;
- 2) Provide "Welcome Home to Pennsylvania" information to recently separated service members;

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- 3) Provide information regarding program initiatives, resources, training opportunities, veteran service organizations and services available to be utilized by individuals or groups who support veterans and their families as volunteers and offer outreach and support for veterans;
- 4) Coordinate with county directors of veterans' affairs by providing information of veterans who request support for federal and state benefits and programs; and
- 5) Coordinate with veterans' service officers from veterans' service officer grant programs or other veterans' service officers to assist veterans in applying for federal veteran benefits.

This act shall take effect in 60 days.

FISCAL IMPACT:

According to the department, enactment of this legislation will have no fiscal impact on Commonwealth funds. The bill aligns the program with the PA VETConnect Program that currently exists within the department, and the requirements established in the bill will be integrated into the department's current activities.

The current PA VETConnect Program is funded through the department's General Government Operations appropriation. The department's budget request includes \$500,000 for the program in FY 2023-24.