

MEMO



SEP 06 2011

Senate of Pennsylvania

September 2, 2011

TO: ALL SENATORS

FROM:

Stewart J. Greenleaf

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stewart J. Greenleaf".

SUBJECT: Cosponsorship – **Mental Health Services for Military Personnel and Family**

I am introducing legislation amending the Volunteer Health Services Act to expand it to include mental health services provided to military personnel and their families.

A constituent who is a retired board certified psychiatrist recently became aware of a nonprofit organization known as Give an Hour, which has created a network of about 1,200 mental health professionals nationwide who literally give an hour of their time each week to provide free mental health services to military personnel and their families regardless of income. Under this model, a mental health professional would receive referrals from Give an Hour and provide services at a site that is likely outside a clinic setting (i.e., library, community center, church).

In attempting to apply for a volunteer license under the Volunteer Health Services Act to provide mental health services via Give an Hour, my constituent was informed by the State Board of Medicine that the Act does not allow the issuance of a volunteer license for any volunteer work. Currently, the Act allows a retired health care provider to provide free primary health care services to low-income individuals inside an approved clinic. However, the Act would not apply to a retired health care provider who wishes to provide free mental health care services to military personnel or their families outside a clinic setting.

This legislation would expand the Act to allow psychiatrists, psychologists and counselors the ability to obtain a volunteer license so that they may provide free mental health services via Give an Hour to military personnel and their loved ones, regardless of income, whether inside or outside a clinic setting. The definition of "Approved clinic" is amended to include an organization such as Give an Hour and the term "mental health services" includes marital and family therapy, substance abuse counseling, and treatment for post-traumatic stress disorder. The measure also requires the licensed volunteer providing free mental health services to furnish each client with a written explanation of the exemptions from civil liability provided for under the Act.

This legislation has been reviewed by the Department of State and the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs and reflects their feedback. Expanding this Act to allow mental health professionals to qualify for a volunteer license will enable them to provide complimentary and confidential mental health counseling to returning troops and their loved ones who have sacrificed for our country

If you would like to cosponsor this legislation, please contact Pat Snively of my office by e-mailing her at psnively@pasen.gov.