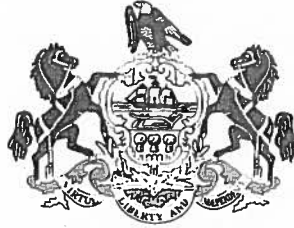


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**House of Representatives**  
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania  
Harrisburg  
October 4, 2011

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**TO:** ALL HOUSE MEMBERS

**FROM:** Kate M. Harper, Esq.  
61<sup>st</sup> Legislative District 

**SUBJECT:** Cosponsorship – Giving back to our Military Families

I recently learned of a non-profit organization known as "Give an Hour," which was created by a network of 1,200 mental health professionals nationwide who each gives an hour of their time every week to provide free mental health services to military personnel and their families. Under the program, a mental health expert would receive referrals and provide free services at a site that is likely outside a clinical setting (i.e. library, community center, church). This is to ensure the privacy of those seeking the services.

A short time ago, one of my constituents, a retired board certified psychiatrist, applied for a volunteer license under the current Volunteer Health Services Act, but was rejected by the State Board of Medicine because the act does not permit the issuance of such a license for any volunteer work provided by a retired mental health care worker outside an "approved health clinic."

My legislation seeks to amend the Volunteer Health Services Act – expanding it to include psychiatrist, psychologist and counselors for military personnel and their families. The legislation would change the current language 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 clinical setting. The definition of "approved clinic" is amended to include an organization such as Give an Hour and the term "mental health services" will include 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.

The Department of State and the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs have reviewed this legislation and it reflects their feedback. Expanding this act to allow mental health professionals to qualify for a volunteer license and will enable them to provide complimentary/confidential mental health counseling to troops and their loved ones who have faithfully served the United States and fought for our freedom.

Please join me in supporting our military personnel and their families by supporting this important piece of legislation by contacting Alison Shank in my office at [ashank@pahousegop.com](mailto:ashank@pahousegop.com).