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THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

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HOUSE BILL

No. 951 Session of  
2019

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INTRODUCED BY SCHWEYER, HILL-EVANS, SOLOMON, RABB, DONATUCCI,  
KIRKLAND, T. DAVIS, POLINCHOCK, SCHLOSSBERG, KINSEY, MURT,  
BERNSTINE, READSHAW, CALTAGIRONE, ISAACSON, FREEMAN, DALEY,  
SAINATO, MARKOSEK, DeLUCA AND WEBSTER, MARCH 25, 2019

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REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS AND EMERGENCY  
PREPAREDNESS, MARCH 25, 2019

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AN ACT

1 Establishing the Veteran Suicide Prevention Grant Program;  
2 conferring powers and imposing duties on the Department of  
3 Military and Veterans Affairs; and establishing the Veteran  
4 Suicide Prevention Fund.

5 The General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania  
6 hereby enacts as follows:

7 Section 1. Short title.

8 This act shall be known and may be cited as the Veteran  
9 Suicide Prevention Grant Program Act.

10 Section 2. Declaration of policy.

11 The General Assembly finds and declares that it is critical  
12 to ensure that all United States military veterans in this  
13 Commonwealth and their loved ones have the necessary resources  
14 and support when dealing with the invisible wounds of war and  
15 that struggling veterans are able to receive needed assistance  
16 before reaching a point of despair and taking the irrevocable  
17 step of taking their own lives.

1 Section 3. Definitions.

2 The following words and phrases when used in this act shall  
3 have the meanings given to them in this section unless the  
4 context clearly indicates otherwise:

5 "Department." The Department of Military and Veterans  
6 Affairs of the Commonwealth.

7 "Eligible entity." Includes:

8 (1) A not-for-profit organization.

9 (2) A local government agency.

10 (3) A veterans' service organization.

11 (4) A private organization.

12 "Fund." The Veteran Suicide Prevention Fund established  
13 under section 5.

14 "Program." The Veteran Suicide Prevention Grant Program  
15 established under section 4.

16 Section 4. Program.

17 (a) Establishment.--The Veteran Suicide Prevention Grant  
18 Program is established. The program shall be administered by the  
19 department in accordance with this act. The goal of the program  
20 is to provide funding for community-based services, programs and  
21 activities that will reduce the rate of suicide among veterans  
22 in this Commonwealth.

23 (b) Award of grants.--The department may award grants  
24 annually to eligible entities. Grants shall be used to support  
25 programs and activities designed to prevent veteran suicide,  
26 including the following:

27 (1) Suicide prevention support groups.

28 (2) Depression screenings.

29 (3) Suicide prevention or crisis hotline.

30 (4) Suicide prevention education and outreach.

1 (5) Any other related services that provide suicide  
2 prevention and support to veterans and their families.

3 (c) Amount.--The amount of a grant may not exceed \$25,000  
4 for each eligible entity approved by the department.

5 (d) Compliance.--The department shall document compliance of  
6 each grant recipient with the requirements of this act.

7 (e) Application forms.--Grant application forms shall be  
8 developed by the department and made available on the  
9 department's publicly accessible Internet website.

10 Section 5. Veteran Suicide Prevention Fund.

11 (a) Establishment.--The Veteran Suicide Prevention Fund is  
12 established in the State Treasury.

13 (b) Source of funding.--The fund shall consist of revenue  
14 from fees allocated under this section and gifts, grants,  
15 bequests or devises from any source, including the Federal  
16 Government and the State government.

17 (c) Fee increase.--The fee imposed by the Department of  
18 Health for each of the following shall be increased by \$2:

19 (1) The issuance of a certified copy of a birth record  
20 under section 609-A(6) of the act of April 9, 1929 (P.L.177,  
21 No.175), known as The Administrative Code of 1929.

22 (2) The issuance of a certified copy of a death record  
23 under section 609-A(6) of The Administrative Code of 1929.

24 (d) Deposit.--Two dollars of each fee specified in  
25 subsection (c) shall be deposited into the fund on a monthly  
26 basis.

27 (e) Use of fund.--Money in the fund shall be used  
28 exclusively for the program, and no more than 5% may be expended  
29 for costs of the department to administer the program.

30 Section 6. Restriction.

1 Grants may not be used for the capital needs of an eligible  
2 entity.

3 Section 7. Department authority.

4 The department may promulgate regulations and issue  
5 guidelines and directives as deemed necessary to carry out the  
6 provisions of this act.

7 Section 8. Effective date.

8 This act shall take effect in 60 days.