

[DISCUSSION DRAFT]

**SUBSTITUTE FOR THE AMENDMENT IN THE NATURE OF A SUBSTITUTE TO
H.R. 3495**

OFFERED BY -----

Strike all after the enacting clause and insert the following:

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Improve Well-Being for Veterans Act”.

**SEC. 2. FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TO CERTAIN ENTITIES TO PROVIDE OR
COORDINATE THE PROVISION OF SUICIDE PREVENTION SERVICES
FOR ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS AND THEIR FAMILIES.**

(a) **DISTRIBUTION OF FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE.**—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall provide financial assistance to eligible entities approved under this section through the award of grants to such entities to provide or coordinate the provision of services to eligible individuals and their families to reduce the risk of suicide. The Secretary shall carry out this section in coordination with the President's Roadmap to Empower Veterans and End the National Tragedy of Suicide Task Force, to the extent practicable.

(b) **AWARD OF GRANTS.**—

(1) **IN GENERAL.**—The Secretary shall award a grant to each eligible entity for which the Secretary has approved an application under subsection (e) to provide or coordinate the provision of suicide prevention services under this section.

(2) **GRANT AMOUNTS, INTERVALS OF PAYMENT, AND MATCHING FUNDS.**—In accordance with the services being provided under a grant under this section and the duration of those services, the Secretary may—

(A) award up to \$750,000 per grant per fiscal year;

(B) establish intervals of payment for the administration of the grant; and

(C) establish a requirement for the recipient of the grant to provide matching funds in a specified percentage.

(c) DISTRIBUTION OF GRANTS AND PREFERENCE.—

(1) DISTRIBUTION.—

(A) PRIORITY.—In compliance with subparagraphs (B) and (C), in determining how to distribute grants under this section, the Secretary may prioritize—

(i) rural communities;

(ii) Tribal lands;

(iii) territories;

(iv) medically underserved areas;

(v) areas with a high number or percentage of minority veterans or women veterans;

(vi) areas with a high number or percentage of calls to the Veterans Crisis Line.

(B) AREAS WITH NEED.—The Secretary shall ensure that, to the extent practicable, grants under this section are distributed—

(i) to provide services in areas of the United States that have experienced high rates of suicide by eligible individuals, including suicide attempts; and

(ii) to eligible entities that can assist eligible individuals at risk of suicide who are not currently receiving health care furnished by the Department of Veterans Affairs.

(C) GEOGRAPHY.—In distributing grants under subparagraph (B), the Secretary may provide grants to eligible entities that furnish services to eligible individuals and their families in geographically dispersed areas.

(2) PREFERENCE.—The Secretary shall give preference to eligible entities that have demonstrated the ability to coordinate suicide prevention services.

(d) REQUIREMENTS FOR RECEIPT OF GRANTS.—

(1) NOTIFICATION THAT SERVICES ARE FROM DEPARTMENT.— Each entity receiving grants under this section to provide suicide prevention services to eligible individuals and their families shall notify the recipients of such services that such services are being paid for, in whole or in part, by the Department.

(2) DEVELOPMENT OF PLAN WITH BENEFICIARIES.—Any plan developed with respect to the provision of suicide prevention services for an eligible individual or their family shall be developed in consultation with the eligible individual.

(3) COORDINATION.—An entity receiving grants under this section shall—

(A) coordinate with the Secretary with respect to the provision of clinical services to eligible individuals in accordance with subsection (l) or any other provisions of the law regarding the delivery of health care by the Secretary;

(B) inform a veteran who receives assistance under this section of the eligibility of the veteran to enroll in the patient enrollment system of the Department of Veterans Affairs established and operated under section 1705 of title 38, United States Code; and

(C) if such a veteran wishes to so enroll, inform the veteran of the point of contact at the nearest medical center of the Department who can assist the veteran in such enrollment.

(4) MEASUREMENT AND MONITORING.—An entity receiving grants under this section shall submit to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs a description of such tools and assessments the entity uses or will use to determine the effectiveness of the services furnished by the entity, including but not limited to—

(A) the effect of the services furnished by the entity on the financial stability of the eligible individual;

(B) the mental resiliency and mental outlook of the eligible individual; and

(C) the social support of the eligible individual.

(5) REPORTS.—The Secretary—

(A) shall require each entity receiving grants under this section to submit to the Secretary an annual report that describes the projects carried out with such grants during the year covered by the report;

(B) shall specify to each such entity the evaluation criteria and data and information, to be submitted in such report; and

(C) may require such entities to submit to the Secretary such additional reports as the Secretary considers appropriate.

(e) APPLICATION FOR GRANTS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—An eligible entity seeking grants under this section shall submit to the Secretary an application therefor in such form, in such manner, and containing such commitments and information as the Secretary considers necessary to carry out this section.

(2) MATTERS TO BE INCLUDED.—Each application submitted by an eligible entity under paragraph (1) shall contain the following:

(A) A description of the suicide prevention services proposed to be provided by the eligible entity and the identified need for those services.

(B) A detailed plan describing how the eligible entity proposes to coordinate or deliver suicide prevention services to eligible individuals, including—

(i) an identification of the community partners, if any, with which the eligible entity proposes to work in delivering such services;

(ii) a description of the arrangements currently in place between the eligible entity and such partners; and

(iii) an identification of how long such arrangements have been in place.

(C) A description of the eligible individuals and their families proposed to be provided suicide prevention services.

(D) Based on information and methods developed by the Secretary for purposes of this subsection, an estimate of the number of eligible individuals at risk of suicide and their families proposed to be provided suicide prevention services, including the percentage of those eligible individuals who are not currently receiving care furnished by the Department.

(E) Evidence of the experience of the eligible entity (and the proposed partners of the entity, if any,) in providing suicide prevention services to individuals at risk of suicide, particularly to eligible individuals and their families.

(F) A description of the managerial and technological capacity of the eligible entity—

(i) to coordinate the provision of suicide prevention services with the provision of other services;

(ii) to assess on an on-going basis the needs of eligible individuals and their families for suicide prevention services;

(iii) to coordinate the provision of suicide prevention services with the services of the Department for which the individuals are eligible;

(iv) to tailor suicide prevention services to the needs of eligible individuals and their families;

(v) to continuously seek new sources of assistance to ensure the continuity of suicide prevention services for eligible individuals and their families as long as they are determined to be at risk of suicide; and

(vi) to measure the effects on the lives of eligible individuals and their families who receive such services provided by the organization.

(G) Clearly defined objectives for the provision of such services.

(H) A description and physical address of the primary location of the eligible entity.

(I) A description of the geographic area and boundaries the eligible entity plans to serve during the year for which the application applies.

(J) A description of the services the eligible entity proposes to deliver directly and a description of any services the eligible entity proposes to deliver through an agreement with a community partner, if any.

(K) The amount of grant funds proposed to be made available to community partners, if any, through agreements.

(L) A description of how the eligible entity will assess the effectiveness of the provision of grants under this section.

(M) A description of how the eligible entity will determine the need of an eligible individual for longitudinal care.

(N) Such additional application criteria as the Secretary considers appropriate.

(f) TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall provide training and technical assistance to eligible entities in receipt of grants under this section regarding—

(A) the data required to be collected and shared with the Department;

(B) the means of data collection and sharing;

(C) familiarization with and appropriate use of any tool to be used to measure the effectiveness of the use of the grants provided; and

(D) the requirements for reporting under subsection (d)(4) on services provided via such grants.

(2) PROVISION OF TRAINING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE.—The Secretary may provide the training and technical assistance described in paragraph (1) directly or through grants or contracts with appropriate public or nonprofit entities.

(g) ADMINISTRATION OF GRANT PROGRAM.—

(1) SELECTION CRITERIA.—The Secretary, in consultation with entities specified in paragraph (3), shall establish criteria for the selection of eligible entities that have submitted applications under subsection (e).

(2) DEVELOPMENT OF MEASURES AND METRICS.—The Secretary shall develop, in consultation with entities specified in paragraph (3), the following:

(A) A framework for collecting and sharing information about entities in receipt of grants under this section for purposes of improving the services available for eligible individuals and their families, set forth by service type, locality, and eligibility criteria.

(B) The measures to be used by each entity in receipt of grants under this section to determine the effectiveness of the programming being provided by such entity in improving mental resiliency and mental outlook of eligible individuals and their families.

(C) Metrics for measuring the effectiveness of the provision of grants under this section.

(3) COORDINATION.—In developing a plan for the design and implementation of the provision of grants under this section, including criteria for the award of grants, the Secretary shall consult with the following:

(A) Veterans service organizations.

(B) National organizations representing potential community partners of eligible entities in providing supportive services to address the needs of eligible individuals and their families, including national organizations that—

(i) advocate for the needs of individuals with or at risk of behavioral health conditions;

(ii) represent mayors;

(iii) represent unions;

(iv) represent first responders; or

(v) represent chiefs of police and sheriffs.

(C) National organizations representing members of the Armed Forces.

(D) Organizations with which the Department has a current memoranda of agreement or understanding related to mental health or suicide prevention.

(E) State departments of veterans affairs.

(F) National organizations representing members of the reserve components of the Armed Forces.

(G) National organizations representing members of the Coast Guard.

(H) Vet Centers.

(I) Organizations with experience in creating measurement tools for purposes of determining programmatic effectiveness.

(J) National Alliance on Mental Illness.

(K) The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, the President's Roadmap to Empower Veterans and End the National

Tragedy of Suicide Task Force, and such other organizations as the Secretary considers appropriate.

(4) REPORT ON GRANT CRITERIA.—Not later than 30 days before notifying eligible entities of the availability of funding under this section, the Secretary shall submit to the appropriate committees of Congress a report containing—

(A) criteria for the award of a grant under this section;

(B) the tool to be used by the Department to measure the effectiveness of the use of grants provided under this section; and

(C) a framework for the sharing of information about entities in receipt of grants under this section.

(h) INFORMATION ON POTENTIAL ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary may make available to recipients of grants under this section certain information regarding potential eligible individuals of services for which such grant is provided.

(2) INFORMATION INCLUDED.—The information made available under paragraph (1) with respect to potential eligible individuals may include the following:

(A) Confirmation of the status of a potential eligible individual as a veteran.

(B) Confirmation of whether a potential eligible individual is currently receiving care furnished by the Department or has recently received such care or benefits.

(i) DURATION.—The authority of the Secretary to provide grants under this section shall terminate on the date that is three years after the date on which the first grant is awarded under this section.

(j) REPORTING.—

(1) INTERIM REPORT.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 18 months after the date on which the first grant is awarded under this section, the Secretary shall submit to the appropriate committees of Congress a report on the provision of grants to eligible entities under this section.

(B) ELEMENTS.—The report submitted under subparagraph (A) shall include the following:

(i) An assessment of the effectiveness of the grant program under this section.

(ii) A list of grant recipients and their partner organizations, if any, that delivered services funded by the grant and the amount of such grant received by each recipient and partner organization.

(iii) The number of eligible individuals supported by each grant recipient, including through services provided to family members disaggregated by—

(I) age;

(II) gender;

(III) whether each such eligible individual is enrolled in the patient enrollment system of the Department under section 1705 of title 38, United States Code;

(IV) type of service for which such eligible individual was referred; and

(V) the percentage of all such referrals made to the Department.

(iv) The number of eligible individuals supported by grants under this section, including through services provided to family members.

(v) The number of eligible individuals supported by grants under this section, including through services provided to family members, who were not previously receiving care furnished by

the Department, with specific numbers for the population of eligible individuals described in subsection (n)(3)(B) of this section.

(vi) The number of eligible individuals whose mental resiliency and mental outlook received a baseline measurement assessment under this section and the number of such eligible individuals whose mental resiliency and mental outlook will be measured by the Department or a community partner over a period of time for any improvements.

(vii) The types of data the Department was able to collect and share with partners, including a characterization of the benefits of that data.

(viii) The number and percentage of eligible individuals referred to the point of contact at the medical center of the Department.

(ix) A detailed account of how the grant funds were used, including executive compensation, overhead costs, and other indirect costs.

(x) A description of any outreach activities conducted by the eligible entity with respect to services provided using the grant.

(xi) The number of individuals who seek services from the grantee who were not eligible individuals.

(C) The Secretary may require eligible entities receiving grants under this section to provide such information as the Secretary determines necessary to report to Congress the elements provided in subparagraph (B).

(2) FINAL REPORT.—Not later than three years after the date on which the first grant is awarded under this section, and annually thereafter for every year in which the program is in effect, the Secretary shall submit to the appropriate committees of Congress—

(A) a follow-up on the interim report submitted under paragraph (1) containing the elements set forth in subparagraph (B) of such paragraph; and

(B) a report on—

(i) the effectiveness of the provision of grants under this section, including the effectiveness of community partners in conducting outreach to eligible individuals and their families;

(ii) an assessment of the increased capacity of the Department to provide services to eligible individuals and their families, set forth by State, as a result of the provision of grants under this section;

(iii) the feasibility and advisability of extending or expanding the provision of grants consistent with this section; and

(iv) such other elements as considered appropriate by the Secretary.

(3) THIRD PARTY ASSESSMENT.—

(A) STUDY OF GRANT PROGRAM.—Not later than 180 days after the commencement of the grant program under this section, the Secretary shall seek to enter into a contract with an appropriate entity to conduct a study of the grant program. In conducting such study, the entity shall—

(i) evaluate the effectiveness of the program in addressing the factors that contribute to suicide through eligible entities located in communities; and

(ii) compare the results of the program with other national programs in delivering resources to eligible individuals in the communities where they live that address the factors that contribute to suicide.

(B) ASSESSMENT.—

(i) IN GENERAL.—The contract under paragraph (1) shall provide that not later than 24 months after the commencement of the grant program under this section, the appropriate entity shall submit to the Secretary an assessment based on the study conducted pursuant to such contract.

(ii) SUBMITTAL TO CONGRESS.—Upon receipt of the assessment under subparagraph (A), the Secretary shall submit to the appropriate Committees of Congress a copy of the assessment.

(C) APPROPRIATE ENTITY.—An appropriate entity described in this paragraph means a non-government entity with experience optimizing and assessing organizations that deliver services.

(k) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is authorized to be appropriated to the Secretary to carry out this section a total of \$174,000,000 for fiscal years 2021 through 2025.

(l) PROVISION OF CARE TO ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS.—When the Secretary determines it is clinically appropriate, the Secretary shall furnish to eligible individuals receiving support through grants provided under this section with an initial mental health assessment and mental health or behavioral health care services authorized under chapter 17 of title 38, United States Code, that are required to treat the mental or behavioral health care needs of the eligible individual, including risk of suicide.

(m) AGREEMENTS WITH COMMUNITY PARTNERS.—The eligible entity may use grant funds to enter into an agreement with a community partner under which the eligible entity may provide funds to a community partner for the provision of covered services to eligible individuals and their families.

(n) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

(1) APPROPRIATE COMMITTEES OF CONGRESS.—The term “appropriate committees of Congress” means—

(A) the Committee on Veterans’ Affairs and the Subcommittee on Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies of the Committee on Appropriations of the Senate; and

(B) the Committee on Veterans' Affairs and the Subcommittee on Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies of the Committee on Appropriations of the House of Representatives.

(2) ELIGIBLE ENTITY.—The term “eligible entity” means—

(A) an incorporated private institution or foundation—

(i) no part of the net earnings of which inures to the benefit of any member, founder, contributor, or individual;

(ii) that has a governing board that would be responsible for the operation of the suicide prevention services provided under this section; and

(iii) that is approved by the Secretary as to financial responsibility;

(B) a corporation wholly owned and controlled by an organization meeting the requirements of clauses (i), (ii), and (iii) of subparagraph (A);

(C) a tribally designated housing entity (as defined in section 4 of the Native American Housing Assistance and Self-Determination Act of 1996 (25 U.S.C. 4103));

(D) a community-based organization that can effectively network with local civic organizations, regional health systems, and other settings where eligible individuals and their families are likely to have contact; or

(E) State or local governments.

(3) ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUAL.—The term “eligible individual” includes a person at risk of suicide who is—

(A) a veteran as defined in section 101 of title 38, United States Code;

(B) an individual as described in section 1720(I)(b) of title 38, United States Code;

(C) an individual as described in section 1712A(a)(1)(C)(i)-(iv) of title 38, United States Code.

(4) RISK OF SUICIDE.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—The term “risk of suicide” means exposure to or the existence of any of the following (to a degree determined by the Secretary pursuant to regulations):

(i) Health risk factors, including the following:

(I) Mental health challenges.

(II) Substance abuse.

(III) Serious or chronic health conditions or pain.

(IV) Traumatic brain injury.

(ii) Environmental risk factors, including the following:

(I) Access to lethal means (such as drugs, firearms, etc.).

(II) Prolonged stress.

(III) Stressful life events.

(IV) Unemployment.

(V) Homelessness.

(VI) Recent loss.

(VII) Legal or financial challenges.

(iii) Historical risk factors, including the following:

(I) Previous suicide attempts.

(II) Family history of suicide.

(III) History of abuse, neglect, or trauma.

(B) DEGREE OF RISK.—The Secretary may, by regulation, establish a process for determining degrees of risk of suicide for use by grant recipients to focus the delivery of services using grant funds.

(5) SUICIDE PREVENTION SERVICES.—The term “suicide prevention services” means services to address the needs of eligible individuals and their families and includes the following:

(A) Outreach to identify those at risk of suicide.

(B) A baseline mental health assessment for risk screening and referral to care.

(C) Education on suicide risk and prevention to families and communities.

(D) Provision of clinical services to treat immediate need and, if the eligible individual refuses or is ineligible for referral under subsection (1), ongoing services as required. Any ongoing clinical services provided by the entity receiving grants shall be at the expense of the entity.

(E) Case management services.

(F) Peer support services.

(G) Assistance in obtaining any benefits from the Department that the eligible individuals and their families may be eligible to receive, including—

(i) vocational and rehabilitation counseling;

(ii) supportive services for homeless veterans;

(iii) employment and training services;

(iv) educational assistance; and

(v) health care services.

(H) Assistance in obtaining and coordinating the provision of other benefits provided by the Federal Government, a State or local government, or an eligible entity.

(I) Assistance with emergent needs relating to—

(i) health care services;

(ii) daily living services;

(iii) personal financial planning;

(iv) transportation services;

(v) temporary income support services;

(vi) fiduciary and representative payee services;

(vii) legal services to assist the eligible individual with issues that may contribute to the risk of suicide; and

(viii) child care (not to exceed \$5,000 per eligible individual's family per fiscal year).

(J) Assistance under this paragraph may not include direct cash assistance to eligible individuals or their families.

(K) Such other services necessary for improving the resiliency of eligible individuals and their families as the Secretary considers appropriate, which may include—

(i) adaptive sports or in-place recreational therapy;

(ii) substance use reduction programming;

(iii) individual, group, or family counseling;

(iv) relationship coaching; and

(v) financial counseling.

(L) Non-traditional and innovative approaches and treatment practices, as determined appropriate by the Secretary, in consultation with appropriate entities.

(6) VET CENTER.—The term “Vet Center” has the meaning given that term in section 1712A(h)(1) of title 38, United States Code.

(7) FAMILY.—The term “family” means, with respect to an eligible individual at risk of suicide, any of the following:

(A) A parent.

(B) A spouse.

(C) A child.

(D) A sibling.

(E) A step-family member.

(F) An extended family member.

(G) Any other individual who lives with the eligible individual.

(8) VETERANS SERVICE ORGANIZATION.—The term “veterans service organization” means any organization recognized by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs for the representation of veterans under section 5902 of title 38, United States Code.