

JAN 23 2015

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# A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO VETERANS.

**BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:**

1           SECTION 1. Chapter 321, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is  
2 amended by adding a new part to be appropriately designated and  
3 to read as follows:

4                           **"PART . VETERAN HEALTH CARE**

5           **§321-           Suicide prevention program; veterans.** (a) The  
6 department of health, in consultation with the director of the  
7 office of veterans' services, shall develop and carry out a  
8 comprehensive program designed to reduce the incidence of  
9 suicide among veterans in Hawaii by incorporating the components  
10 described in this section.

11           (b) Mandatory training for appropriate staff and  
12 contractors, including all medical personnel of the department  
13 of health who interact with veterans shall be provided. This  
14 training shall cover information appropriate to the duties being  
15 performed by staff and contractors. The training shall include  
16 information on:

17           (1) Recognizing risk factors for suicide;



1           (2) Proper protocols for responding to crisis situations  
2           involving veterans who may be at high risk for  
3           suicide; and

4           (3) Best practices for suicide prevention.

5           (c) The director of health shall direct that State medical  
6           staff offer mental health in their overall health assessment  
7           when veterans seek medical care at a medical facility, and make  
8           referrals, at the request of the veteran concerned, to  
9           appropriate counseling and treatment programs for veterans who  
10          show signs or symptoms of mental health problems.

11          (d) The department of health shall designate a suicide  
12          prevention counselor at each state medical facility. Each  
13          counselor shall work with local emergency rooms, police  
14          departments, mental health organizations, and veterans service  
15          organizations to engage in outreach to veterans and improve the  
16          coordination of mental health care to veterans.

17          (e) The department of health shall provide for research on  
18          best practices for suicide prevention among veterans. Research  
19          shall be conducted under this subsection in consultation with  
20          the following entities:



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1           (1) The United States Department of Health and Human  
2           Services;

3           (2) The National Institute of Mental Health;

4           (3) The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services  
5           Administration; and

6           (4) The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

7           (f) Research on mental health care for veterans who have  
8 experienced sexual trauma while in military service shall be  
9 included in the program. The research design shall include  
10 consideration of veterans of a reserve component.

11          (g) Twenty-four-hour mental health care shall be made  
12 available to veterans.

13          (h) A toll-free hotline for veterans may be established,  
14 staffed by appropriately trained mental health personnel, and  
15 available at all times.

16          (i) Outreach to and education for veterans and the  
17 families of veterans, with special emphasis on providing  
18 information to veterans of Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation  
19 Enduring Freedom and the families of those veterans. Education  
20 to promote mental health shall include information designed to:

21          (1) Remove the stigma associated with mental illness;



- 1           (2) Encourage veterans to seek treatment and assistance  
2           for mental illness;
- 3           (3) Promote skills for coping with mental illness; and
- 4           (4) Help families of veterans with:
- 5           (A) Understanding issues arising from the  
6           readjustment of veterans to civilian life;
- 7           (B) Identifying signs and symptoms of mental illness;  
8           and
- 9           (C) Encouraging veterans to seek assistance for  
10          mental illness.
- 11          (j) A peer support counseling program shall be established  
12 under the program through which veterans shall be permitted to  
13 volunteer as peer counselors:
- 14          (1) To assist other veterans with issues related to mental  
15          health and readjustment; and
- 16          (2) To conduct outreach to veterans and the families of  
17          veterans.

18          In carrying out the peer support counseling program under  
19 this subsection, the department of health shall provide adequate  
20 training for peer counselors.



1 (k) The department of health may provide for other actions  
2 to reduce the incidence of suicide among veterans that the  
3 director of health considers appropriate."

4 SECTION 2. There is appropriated out of the general  
5 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$1,000,000 or so much  
6 thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2015-2016 and the  
7 same sum or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year  
8 2016-2017 for a comprehensive program designed to reduce the  
9 incidence of suicide among veterans..

10 The sums appropriated shall be expended by the department  
11 of health for the purposes of this Act.

12 SECTION 3. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2015.

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INTRODUCED BY:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dan Zumbardo", is written over a horizontal line. The signature is stylized and cursive.

# S.B. NO. 178

**Report Title:**

Veterans; Suicide Prevention

**Description:**

Directs the DOH to establish a comprehensive suicide prevention program for veterans. Appropriates moneys.

*The summary description of legislation appearing on this page is for informational purposes only and is not legislation or evidence of legislative intent.*

