



Rep. Stephanie A. Kifowit

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1 AMENDMENT TO HOUSE BILL 2628

2 AMENDMENT NO. _____. Amend House Bill 2628 by replacing
3 everything after the enacting clause with the following:

4 "Section 1. Short title. This Act may be cited as the
5 Veterans Suicide Prevention Commission Act.

6 Section 5. Findings. The General Assembly finds the
7 following:

8 (1) One of the highest priorities and moral duties
9 Illinoisans can undertake is to support those Illinois
10 citizens who have served or are serving our country and
11 State in the United States Armed Forces. Their military
12 service is recognized whether they served on active duty,
13 in the reserves, or as a member of the Illinois National
14 Guard, or have retired. The families of service members
15 are equally recognized.

16 (2) The General Assembly is committed to the members

1 of our military community, and to strengthening their
2 systems of care and supports in a manner that is
3 responsive to their needs by building upon existing
4 collaborations and resources.

5 (3) There are more than 2,000,000 members of the
6 Illinois military community representing about 16% of the
7 Illinois population.

8 (4) Illinois ranks high among the states in the nation
9 with over 40,000 military personnel who have been deployed
10 to support recent conflicts and overseas contingency
11 operations.

12 (5) Illinois service members have given the full
13 measure with the loss of their lives while serving their
14 country and State.

15 (6) Illinois service members have returned home with
16 battle wounds from serving their country and State that
17 are both external and internal.

18 (7) Unprecedented numbers of Illinois' service members
19 have or are experiencing multiple deployments to the
20 active theaters of war, separating them from family,
21 community, and traditional supports for extended periods
22 of time.

23 (8) Service members and their families often endure
24 extended periods of adjustment when faced with physical
25 and psychological disabilities, including post-traumatic
26 stress and traumatic brain injuries, and other

1 debilitating health conditions that pose long-standing
2 challenges for our veterans and their families and for our
3 State.

4 (9) State and local elected officials, including State
5 agency heads, State legislators, and representatives of
6 federal agencies, have a shared responsibility for
7 providing services and support to our military community.

8 (10) Meeting the needs of the military community is
9 not the sole responsibility of one agency or entity, but a
10 collective responsibility of the entire State that
11 requires a high level of collaboration and cooperation
12 between key stakeholders.

13 (11) Other non-government members of our State are
14 integral to the systems of care and supports for the
15 military community, including military and veterans
16 service and advocacy organizations that strive to address
17 the unique challenges faced by this population such as
18 behavioral health issues of mental illness and substance
19 use disorders, serious physical injury, employment,
20 education, and housing.

21 (12) A unified, seamless, and systematic method of
22 accessing services for those who have served our country
23 and our State is needed, particularly in the areas of
24 behavioral health issues of mental illness and substance
25 use disorders, serious physical injury, employment,
26 education, homelessness and housing, and legal assistance.

1 (13) The Illinois Joining Forces Foundation was
2 created by Public Act 98-986 to serve and ensure the
3 long-term sustainability of Illinois Joining Forces, a
4 public-private network of military and veteran-serving
5 organizations critically important for the support of the
6 State's military community.

7 (14) A Veterans Suicide Prevention Commission to plan
8 and coordinate the work of State agencies is needed to
9 develop systems of services and supports that reflect a
10 coordinated collective community approach to serve our
11 military community.

12 Section 10. Commission; purpose. The Veterans Suicide
13 Prevention Commission is created. The Commission shall drive
14 the State's strategic vision for assessing and achieving the
15 successful transition, adjustment, and reintegration of
16 service members of the armed forces, veterans, and their
17 families through the coordination of the collective efforts of
18 public and private organizations throughout the State. The
19 Commission shall facilitate, collaborate, and coordinate the
20 efforts of these organizations to effectively and responsively
21 meet the needs of the military community. In performing these
22 responsibilities, the Commission shall conduct planning,
23 research, education, training, and evaluation activities to
24 improve the operations and coordination of the systems of care
25 and supports. The Commission shall coordinate its activities

1 with those of Illinois Joining Forces and other advocacy
2 organizations for service members of the armed forces,
3 veterans, and their families for the purpose of preventing
4 veteran suicide.

5 Section 15. Composition.

6 (a) The Commission shall consist of the following members:

7 (1) The Governor or his or her designee, who shall
8 serve as Chairperson.

9 (2) The Directors of Military Affairs and Veterans'
10 Affairs or their designees, who shall serve as co-vice
11 chairs.

12 (3) The Lieutenant Governor or his or her designee.

13 (4) The Deputy Governor of Health and Human Services,
14 or the equivalent position if there is no Deputy Governor,
15 or his or her designee.

16 (5) One member appointed by the President of the
17 Senate.

18 (6) One member appointed by the Minority Leader of the
19 Senate.

20 (7) One member appointed by the Speaker of the House
21 of Representatives.

22 (8) One member appointed by the Minority Leader of the
23 House of Representatives.

24 (9) The Secretary of State or his or her designee.

25 (10) The Attorney General or his or her designee.

1 (11) The Treasurer or his or her designee.

2 (12) The Comptroller or his or her designee.

3 (13) The State Superintendent of Education or his or
4 her designee.

5 (14) The Executive Director of the Illinois Board of
6 Higher Education or his or her designee.

7 (15) The Chief Justice of the Illinois Supreme Court
8 or his or her designee.

9 (16) The Director of Aging or his or her designee.

10 (17) The Director of Agriculture or his or her
11 designee.

12 (18) The Director of Central Management Services or
13 his or her designee.

14 (19) The Director of Children and Family Services or
15 his or her designee.

16 (20) The Director of Commerce and Economic Opportunity
17 or his or her designee.

18 (21) The Director of Corrections or his or her
19 designee.

20 (22) The Director of Employment Security or his or her
21 designee.

22 (23) The Director of the Division of Mental Health or
23 his or her designee.

24 (24) The Secretary of Financial and Professional
25 Regulation or his or her designee.

26 (25) The Director of Healthcare and Family Services or

1 his or her designee.

2 (26) The Director of Human Rights or his or her
3 designee.

4 (27) The Secretary of Human Services or his or her
5 designee.

6 (28) The Secretary of Innovation and Technology or his
7 or her designee.

8 (29) The Director of Insurance or his or her designee.

9 (30) The Director of Labor or his or her designee.

10 (31) The Director of Natural Resources or his or her
11 designee.

12 (32) The Director of Public Health or his or her
13 designee.

14 (33) The Director of Revenue or his or her designee.

15 (34) The Chairperson of the Illinois Joining Forces
16 Board or his or her designee.

17 (35) One member designated by Illinois Joining Forces.

18 (b) As necessary, the Commission may appoint by majority
19 vote individuals representing the following:

20 (1) The Illinois Army National Guard.

21 (2) The Illinois Air National Guard.

22 (3) The United States Army or United States Army
23 Reserve.

24 (4) The United States Air Force or United States Air
25 Force Reserve.

26 (5) The United States Navy or United States Navy

1 Reserve.

2 (6) The United States Marine Corps or United States
3 Marine Corps Reserve.

4 (7) The United States Coast Guard or United States
5 Coast Guard Reserve.

6 (8) The Veterans of Foreign Wars, the American Legion,
7 the Daughters of the American Revolution, the Disabled
8 Veterans of America, or any other non-profit organization
9 that solely serves veterans and qualifies for an exemption
10 under 501(c)(3) or 501(c)(19) of the Internal Revenue
11 Code.

12 (9) Military spouses.

13 (10) The brain injury services community that serves
14 veterans.

15 (11) The substance abuse services community that
16 serves veterans.

17 (12) The community-based mental health counseling
18 service community that serves veterans or has significant
19 expertise in the treatment of veterans.

20 (13) Military and military family advocacy networks.

21 (14) Practicing behavioral healthcare specialists that
22 serve veterans or have significant expertise in the
23 treatment of veterans.

24 (15) Community faith-based and spiritual leaders who
25 have experience working with service members, veterans,
26 and their families.

1 (c) The Commission may invite federal agencies such as the
2 U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, the U.S. Department of
3 Labor, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development,
4 and military services agencies to participate on the
5 Commission.

6 (d) The Departments of Military Affairs and Veterans'
7 Affairs shall provide administrative support to the
8 Commission. The Governor's Office shall provide additional
9 support with respect to compliance with State ethics laws, the
10 Open Meetings Act, and the Freedom of Information Act.

11 (e) A simple majority of the members of the Commission
12 shall constitute a quorum.

13 (f) All recommendations made by the Commission shall
14 require approval of a majority of the total membership of the
15 Commission.

16 (g) The Commission shall hold at least 4 meetings each
17 year, but otherwise shall meet at the call of the Chairperson
18 or co-vice chairs. Meetings of the Commission may be conducted
19 in person or via telephone or video conference and shall be
20 open to the public.

21 (h) The Commission may adopt policies, procedures, and
22 whatever additional rules for an organizational structure, and
23 policies and procedures for the Commission's internal
24 operations as are necessary to carry out its function and
25 responsibilities.

26 (i) Members of the Commission shall be appointed for a

1 term of 4 years. Upon expiration of the initial terms, each
2 member shall be reappointed for a term of 4 additional years
3 whereupon their terms will expire requiring the appointment of
4 new members. Members shall serve at the pleasure of the
5 Governor. Vacancies resulting for reasons other than the
6 expiration of a term shall be filled by the Governor for the
7 remainder of the term.

8 (j) Members shall receive no compensation for their
9 services.

10 (k) Service members, veterans, and their families shall be
11 given priority for seats on the Commission, if possible.

12 (l) All departments, agencies, boards, and commissions of
13 the executive branch shall fully cooperate with the Commission
14 in carrying out the purposes of this Act and shall provide
15 staff support and other assistance as requested.

16 Section 20. Duties.

17 (a) The primary focus of the Commission shall be on
18 improving the efficiency and effectiveness of those State
19 programs and services related to the military community. The
20 Commission shall review the activities related to the military
21 community of each State agency to ensure there is efficient
22 and effective coordination and alignment with the needs of the
23 military community. Accountability shall be promoted by
24 tracking the progress of initiatives and programs and
25 services; developing strategic collaboration among public

1 (primarily the Department of Public Health, the Department of
2 Human Services' Division of Mental Health, and the Department
3 of Veterans' Affairs) and private partners (primarily Illinois
4 Joining Forces); and increasing public awareness of the issues
5 relating to the services and support of the military community
6 to prevent veteran suicide.

7 (b) The Commission shall promote coordination and
8 efficiency among State, county, and local units of government
9 and municipalities through knowledge sharing, mobilization of
10 resources, and an aligned approach to serving the military
11 community to prevent veteran suicide.

12 (c) The Commission shall issue periodic reports on,
13 without limitation, its establishment of strategic goals, its
14 public research agenda, and its performance and progress in
15 meeting its goals.

16 (d) The Commission shall monitor the progress of the
17 implementation of the Strategic Action Plan on Homelessness
18 developed by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services,
19 the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services
20 Administration's (SAMHSA) Service Members, Veterans, and their
21 Families Technical Assistance Center, SAMHSA's Policy
22 Academies, and SAMHSA's Implementation Academies as they
23 address the needs of the service members and veterans
24 community, and their families, to prevent veteran suicide.

25 (e) Each member agency on the Commission must designate a
26 member of its management staff as its Ombudsman for the

1 military community. The Ombudsman shall be that agency's
2 primary point of contact for military community issues. Each
3 member agency shall also designate one full-time employee to
4 provide staff assistance to the Commission.

5 Section 25. Transparency. In addition to whatever policies
6 or procedures it may adopt, the Commission shall be subject to
7 the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act and the Open
8 Meetings Act.

9 Section 30. Severability. The provisions of this Act are
10 severable under Section 1.31 of the Statute on Statutes."