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I N   S E N A T E

March 7, 2012

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Introduced by Sens. DeFRANCISCO, CARLUCCI -- read twice and ordered printed, and when printed to be committed to the Committee on Veterans, Homeland Security and Military Affairs

AN ACT to amend the executive law, in relation to enacting the "Veterans Mental Health and Chemical Dependency Act"

THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK, REPRESENTED IN SENATE AND ASSEMBLY, DO ENACT AS FOLLOWS:

1     Section 1. Legislative findings and intent. The legislature recognizes  
2     that throughout their service, many of the military personnel from New  
3     York state experienced trauma during active duty, especially in Iraq and  
4     Afghanistan, placing many of them in high risk categories for triggering  
5     substance abuse or mental health issues. More often than not, mental  
6     illness and substance abuse present themselves simultaneously or as a  
7     co-occurring disorder. The consequences of co-occurring disorders,  
8     particularly when untreated or poorly treated, are severe. These disorders  
9     increase the cost of healthcare due to the frequent use of inpatient  
10    treatment, the inability to adhere to such treatment, the risk of  
11    suicide, crime victimization, homelessness, and incarceration.

12    The legislature further finds that the unemployment rate and fierce  
13    competition for a sparse selection of jobs contribute to the tough  
14    obstacle that combat veterans face as they make the transition home from  
15    war.

16    The legislature further finds that New York state has recognized its  
17    responsibility for care for our veterans and their families, offering an  
18    array of economic and health benefits. Now we are called to ensure that  
19    the returning combat veterans can obtain the benefits that they are  
20    entitled to from the various state agencies which offer help to the  
21    returning servicemen and women to make the transition from military  
22    personnel to veteran.

23    S 2. Short title. This act shall be known as the "Veterans Mental  
24    Health and Chemical Dependency Act".

25    S 3. Section 352 of the executive law is amended by adding two new  
26    subdivisions 6 and 7 to read as follows:

EXPLANATION--Matter in *ITALICS* (underscored) is new; matter in brackets  
[ ] is old law to be omitted.

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1 6. THE COMMISSION SHALL DEVELOP AND UPDATE, IN CONSULTATION WITH THE  
2 OFFICE OF MENTAL HEALTH, THE OFFICE OF ALCOHOLISM AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE  
3 SERVICES, DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND DEPARTMENT OF LABOR, A NEW YORK STATE  
4 INTERAGENCY PLAN TO IMPROVE OUTREACH, ASSESSMENT, AND CARE FOR VETERANS  
5 AND THEIR FAMILIES WHO ARE EXPERIENCING MENTAL HEALTH, MAJOR DEPRESSION  
6 AND/OR SUBSTANCE ABUSE PROBLEMS. THE PLAN WOULD ADDRESS THE NEED FOR A  
7 RANGE OF ADDITIONAL SERVICES, INCLUDING, BUT NOT LIMITED TO:

8 A. THE NEED FOR HOUSING THAT IS ACCESSIBLE TO VETERANS WITH PHYSICAL  
9 AND/OR MENTAL DISABILITIES;

10 B. SUICIDE PREVENTION;

11 C. SERVICES THAT ADDRESS THE SPECIAL NEEDS OF FEMALE SERVICE MEMBERS  
12 OR VETERANS;

13 D. SERVICES THAT ADDRESS THE SPECIAL NEEDS OF PHYSICALLY DISABLED  
14 VETERANS;

15 E. PEER OUTREACH AND SUPPORT PROGRAMS;

16 F. SERVICES TO MEET THE EMOTIONAL NEEDS OF CHILDREN, SPOUSE, AND/OR  
17 DOMESTIC PARTNER OF SERVICE MEMBERS OR VETERANS;

18 G. SERVICES AND CONSULTATION FOR VETERANS IN SEARCH OF EMPLOYMENT; AND

19 H. ACCESSIBILITY AND COORDINATION OF INFORMATION.

20 7. THE COMMISSION SHALL SUBMIT A REPORT TO THE DIRECTOR EACH YEAR  
21 AFTER THE EFFECTIVE DATE OF THIS SUBDIVISION. SUCH REPORT SHALL  
22 INCLUDE, BUT NOT BE LIMITED TO, A DESCRIPTION OF THE COMMISSION'S ACTIV-  
23 ITIES CONCERNING THE NEW YORK STATE INTERAGENCY PLAN. THE DIRECTOR SHALL  
24 SUBMIT SUCH REPORT OR A SYNOPSIS OF SUCH REPORT TO THE GOVERNOR AS  
25 PROVIDED IN SECTION THREE HUNDRED FIFTY-THREE OF THIS ARTICLE.

26 S 4. This act shall take effect on the thirtieth day after it shall  
27 have become a law, however, the first New York state interagency plan as  
28 described in subdivision 6 of section 352 of the executive law, as added  
29 by section three of this act, shall be completed not later than one year  
30 after such effective date.