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I N   S E N A T E

May 27, 2010

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Introduced by Sen. ADAMS -- 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, placing many of them  
4     in high risk categories for triggering substance abuse or mental health  
5     issues. More often than not, mental illness and substance abuse present  
6     themselves simultaneously or as a co-occurring disorder. The conse-  
7     quences of co-occurring disorders, particularly when untreated or poorly  
8     treated, are severe. These disorders increase the cost of healthcare due  
9     to the frequent use of inpatient treatment, the ability to adhere to  
10    such treatment, the risk of suicide, crime victimization, homelessness,  
11    and incarceration.

12    The legislature further finds that the unemployment rate for young  
13    veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars was at 21.1 percent, reflect-  
14    ing another tough obstacle that combat veterans face as they make the  
15    transition home from 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. This act shall be known as the "Veterans Mental Health and Chemi-  
24    cal 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 AND/OR SUBSTANCE  
6 ABUSE PROBLEMS. THE PLAN WOULD ADDRESS THE NEED FOR A RANGE OF ADDI-  
7 TIONAL 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. PEER OUTREACH AND SUPPORT PROGRAMS;

14 E. SERVICES TO MEET THE EMOTIONAL NEEDS OF CHILDREN, SPOUSE, AND/OR  
15 DOMESTIC PARTNER OF SERVICE MEMBERS OR VETERANS;

16 F. SERVICES AND CONSULTATION FOR VETERANS IN SEARCH OF EMPLOYMENT; AND

17 G. ACCESSIBILITY AND COORDINATION OF INFORMATION.

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

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