S T A T E O F N E W Y O R K

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I N S E N A T E

March 7, 2012

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:

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

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

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

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

S 3. Section 352 of the executive law is amended by adding two new 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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6. THE COMMISSION SHALL DEVELOP AND UPDATE, IN CONSULTATION WITH THE OFFICE OF MENTAL HEALTH, THE OFFICE OF ALCOHOLISM AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE SERVICES, DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND DEPARTMENT OF LABOR, A NEW YORK STATE INTERAGENCY PLAN TO IMPROVE OUTREACH, ASSESSMENT, AND CARE FOR VETERANS AND THEIR FAMILIES WHO ARE EXPERIENCING MENTAL HEALTH, MAJOR DEPRESSION AND/OR SUBSTANCE ABUSE PROBLEMS. THE PLAN WOULD ADDRESS THE NEED FOR A RANGE OF ADDITIONAL SERVICES, INCLUDING, BUT NOT LIMITED TO:

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

B. SUICIDE PREVENTION;

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

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

E. PEER OUTREACH AND SUPPORT PROGRAMS;

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

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

H. ACCESSIBILITY AND COORDINATION OF INFORMATION.

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

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