

STATE OF NEW YORK

8968

IN SENATE

January 21, 2026

Introduced by Sen. SCARCELLA-SPANTON -- read twice and ordered printed,
and when printed to be committed to the Committee on Veterans, Home-
land Security and Military Affairs

AN ACT to amend the public health law, in relation to establishing a
veteran suicide mortality review board

The People of the State of New York, represented in Senate and Assem-
bly, do enact as follows:

1 Section 1. The public health law is amended by adding a new article
2 38-A to read as follows:

ARTICLE 38-A

VETERAN SUICIDE MORTALITY REVIEW BOARD

5 Section 3850. Veteran suicide mortality review board; establishment and
6 purpose.

7 3851. Membership.

8 3852. Powers and duties.

9 3853. Reporting.

10 3854. Staffing and Resources.

11 § 3850. Veteran suicide mortality review board; establishment and
12 purpose. 1. There is hereby established within the department, in
13 consultation with the office of mental health and the department of
14 veterans' services, a veteran suicide mortality review board, hereinaft-
15 er "the board".

16 2. The board shall build upon New York state's participation in feder-
17 al veteran suicide review programs, including the U.S. Substance Abuse
18 and Mental Health Services Administration/VA Suicide Mortality Review
19 framework and the Governor's Challenge to Prevent Veteran Suicide, and
20 shall serve as the statewide entity responsible for the multidiscipli-
21 nary review of suicide deaths among veterans. The purpose of the board
22 is to:

23 (a) identify trends and systemic factors contributing to veteran
24 suicide;

25 (b) assess gaps in services, access to care, and institutional prac-
26 tices;

27 (c) develop evidence-based recommendations for prevention and policy
28 improvement; and

29 (d) promote collaboration among relevant state, local, and federal
30 agencies.

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

LBD14433-01-6

1 § 3851. Membership. 1. The board shall be composed of the following
2 members, each designated by their respective agency or organization:

3 (a) the commissioner of health, or their designee, who shall be the
4 chair;

5 (b) the commissioner of mental health, or their designee;

6 (c) the state commissioner of veterans' services, or their designee;

7 (d) two representatives of county medical examiners or coroners;

8 (e) two licensed clinicians experienced in mental health and suicide
9 prevention;

10 (f) one representative from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs,
11 who shall be a non-voting member;

12 (g) two public health experts with experience in mortality review or
13 epidemiology; and

14 (h) up to three additional members appointed by the governor with
15 expertise in veterans' issues, community mental health, or suicide
16 prevention.

17 2. Members shall serve for renewable three year terms, and may serve
18 until a successor is appointed.

19 § 3852. Powers and duties. 1. The board shall have the following
20 powers and duties:

21 (a) Case review of deaths by suicide of individuals identified as
22 veterans, including those recently separated from military service.

23 (b) Access to all relevant records, including, but not limited to,
24 death certificates, coroner/medical examiner reports, department records
25 and office of mental health records, and relevant division of veterans'
26 services or VA records, subject to confidentiality protections.

27 (c) Coordination with federal and state partners, including U.S.
28 Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, the U.S.
29 Department of Veterans Affairs, and other agencies involved in veteran
30 suicide prevention.

31 (d) Issue evidence-based recommendations for system improvements,
32 policy, and preventive interventions.

33 2. All individual case information shall be confidential, not subject
34 to subpoena, and not admissible in civil or criminal proceedings. Aggre-
35 gate findings may be published in accordance with section thirty-eight
36 hundred fifty-three of this article.

37 § 3853. Reporting. 1. The board shall submit an annual report to the
38 governor, the legislature, and the commissioner of health summarizing:

39 (a) trends in veteran suicides statewide;

40 (b) systemic gaps or failures contributing to deaths; and

41 (c) recommendations for policy, practice, and program improvements.

42 2. The report shall protect individual privacy, presenting only de-i-
43 dentified or aggregated data.

44 § 3854. Staffing and resources. The department shall provide adminis-
45 trative support, staffing, and analytical capacity necessary for the
46 board to fulfill its duties. The board may also utilize existing federal
47 or state funding, technical assistance, and data systems, including
48 those provided by U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Admin-
49 istration and U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs programs.

50 § 2. This act shall take effect six months after it shall have become
51 a law. The veteran suicide mortality review board established by section
52 one of this act shall convene its first meeting within ninety days of
53 such effective date.