

113TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. _____

To direct the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to provide for the conduct of an evaluation of mental health care and suicide prevention programs of the Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs, to require a pilot program on loan repayment for psychiatrists who agree to serve in the Veterans Health Administration of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

Mr. MCCAIN (for himself, Mr. BURR, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Mr. BLUNT, Mr. MANCHIN, and Ms. MURKOWSKI) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on _____

A BILL

To direct the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to provide for the conduct of an evaluation of mental health care and suicide prevention programs of the Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs, to require a pilot program on loan repayment for psychiatrists who agree to serve in the Veterans Health Administration of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

1 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

2 This Act may be cited as the “Clay Hunt Suicide Pre-
3 vention for American Veterans Act” or the “Clay Hunt
4 SAV Act”.

5 **SEC. 2. EVALUATION OF MENTAL HEALTH CARE AND SUI-**
6 **CIDE PREVENTION PROGRAMS OF DEPART-**
7 **MENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS AND DEPART-**
8 **MENT OF DEFENSE.**

9 (a) EVALUATION.—

10 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary concerned
11 shall provide for the conduct of an evaluation of the
12 mental health care and suicide prevention programs
13 carried out under the laws administered by such
14 Secretary.

15 (2) ELEMENTS.—Each evaluation conducted
16 under paragraph (1) shall—

17 (A) use metrics that are common among
18 and useful for practitioners in the field of men-
19 tal health care and suicide prevention;

20 (B) evaluate the effectiveness of each men-
21 tal health care and suicide prevention program
22 conducted by the Secretary concerned, including
23 such programs conducted at a Center of Excel-
24 lence;

1 (C) identify the most effective and least ef-
2 fective of the programs evaluated under sub-
3 paragraph (B);

4 (D) include recommendations on which
5 programs evaluated under subparagraph (B)
6 can be eliminated or consolidated and which
7 programs can benefit from additional resources;
8 and

9 (E) propose best practices for caring for
10 individuals who suffer from mental health dis-
11 orders or are at risk of suicide.

12 (3) THIRD PARTY.—

13 (A) IN GENERAL.—Each evaluation pro-
14 vided for under paragraph (1) shall be con-
15 ducted by an independent third party unaffili-
16 ated with the Department of Veterans Affairs
17 and the Department of Defense.

18 (B) SUBMITTAL OF EVALUATION.—An
19 independent third party that conducts an eval-
20 uation provided for under paragraph (1) shall
21 submit to the Secretary concerned the evalua-
22 tion of the mental health care and suicide pre-
23 vention programs carried out under the laws
24 administered by such Secretary.

1 (4) REPORT.—Not later than one year after the
2 date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary con-
3 cerned shall submit to the appropriate committees of
4 Congress a report that contains the evaluation sub-
5 mitted to the Secretary under paragraph (3)(B).

6 (b) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

7 (1) APPROPRIATE COMMITTEES OF CON-
8 GRESS.—The term “appropriate committees of Con-
9 gress” means—

10 (A) the Committee on Armed Services and
11 the Committee on Veterans’ Affairs of the Sen-
12 ate; and

13 (B) the Committee on Armed Services and
14 the Committee on Veterans’ Affairs of the
15 House of Representatives.

16 (2) SECRETARY CONCERNED.—The term “Sec-
17 retary concerned” means—

18 (A) the Secretary of Veterans Affairs with
19 respect to matters concerning the Department
20 of Veterans Affairs; and

21 (B) the Secretary of Defense with respect
22 to matters concerning the Department of De-
23 fense.

1 **SEC. 3. PUBLICATION OF INTERNET WEBSITE TO PROVIDE**
2 **INFORMATION REGARDING MENTAL HEALTH**
3 **CARE SERVICES.**

4 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs
5 shall publish an Internet website that serves as a central-
6 ized source to provide veterans with information regarding
7 all of the mental health care services provided by the Sec-
8 retary.

9 (b) ELEMENTS.—The Internet website published
10 under subsection (a) shall provide to veterans information
11 regarding all of the mental health care services available
12 under the laws administered by the Secretary,
13 disaggregated by Veterans Integrated Service Network, in-
14 cluding, with respect to each medical center and commu-
15 nity-based outpatient center—

16 (1) the name and contact information of each
17 social work office;

18 (2) the name and contact information of each
19 mental health clinic;

20 (3) a list of all staff who carry out tasks related
21 to the provision of mental health care services; and

22 (4) any other information the Secretary deter-
23 mines appropriate.

24 (c) UPDATED INFORMATION.—The Secretary shall
25 ensure that the information described in subsection (b)

1 that is published on the Internet website under subsection
2 (a) is updated not less than once every 90 days.

3 (d) OUTREACH.—In carrying out this section, the
4 Secretary shall ensure that the outreach conducted under
5 section 1720F(i) of title 38, United States Code, includes
6 information regarding the Internet website published
7 under subsection (a).

8 **SEC. 4. IMPROVEMENTS TO HEALTH CARE MATTERS.**

9 (a) RESERVE COMPONENTS AND DEPARTMENT OF
10 VETERANS AFFAIRS.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs
11 and the Secretary of Defense, in consultation with the
12 Chief of the National Guard Bureau, shall enter into for-
13 mal strategic relationships between the Joint Forces
14 Headquarters of each State regional commands of the re-
15 serve components of the Armed Forces and the Veterans
16 Service Integrated Network, medical facilities of the De-
17 partment of Veterans Affairs, and other local offices of
18 the Department of Veterans Affairs located in or serving
19 the State with respect to facilitating—

20 (1) the mental health referrals of members of
21 the reserve components of the Armed Forces who
22 have a service-connected disability and are being dis-
23 charged or released from the Armed Forces;

24 (2) timely behavioral health services for such
25 members;

1 (3) communication between the various entities
2 when such members are at risk for behavioral health
3 reasons; and

4 (4) the transfer of documentation for line of
5 duty and fitness for duty determinations.

6 (b) COMPTROLLER GENERAL REPORT ON TRANSI-
7 TION OF CARE.—

8 (1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than April 1,
9 2015, the Comptroller General of the United States
10 shall submit to the congressional defense committees
11 (as defined in section 101(a)(16) of title 10, United
12 States Code), the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of
13 the Senate, and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs
14 of the House of Representatives a report that as-
15 sesses the transition of care for post-traumatic
16 stress disorder or traumatic brain injury.

17 (2) MATTERS INCLUDED.—The report under
18 paragraph (1) shall include the following:

19 (A) The programs, policies, and regula-
20 tions that affect the transition of care for post-
21 traumatic stress disorder or traumatic brain in-
22 jury, particularly with respect to individuals
23 who are taking or have been prescribed
24 antidepressants, stimulants, antipsychotics,

1 mood stabilizers, anxiolytics, depressants, or
2 hallucinogens.

3 (B) Upon transitioning to care furnished
4 by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, the extent
5 to which the pharmaceutical treatment plan of
6 an individual changes and the factors deter-
7 mining such changes.

8 (C) The extent to which the Secretary of
9 Defense and the Secretary of Veterans Affairs
10 have worked together to identify and apply best
11 pharmaceutical treatment practices.

12 (D) A description of the off-formulary
13 waiver process of the Secretary of Veterans Af-
14 fairs, and the extent to which the process is ap-
15 plied efficiently at the treatment level.

16 (E) The benefits and challenges of com-
17 bining the formularies across the Department
18 of Defense and the Department of Veterans Af-
19 fairs.

20 (F) Such other issues as the Comptroller
21 General considers appropriate.

22 (3) TRANSITION OF CARE DEFINED.—In this
23 subsection, the term “transition of care” means the
24 transition of an individual from receiving treatment

1 furnished by the Secretary of Defense to treatment
2 furnished by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

3 **SEC. 5. PILOT PROGRAM FOR REPAYMENT OF EDU-**
4 **CATIONAL LOANS FOR CERTAIN PSYCHIA-**
5 **TRISTS OF VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRA-**
6 **TION.**

7 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs
8 shall carry out a pilot program to repay loans of individ-
9 uals described in subsection (b) that—

10 (1) were used by such individuals to finance the
11 educational expenses of such individuals relating to
12 psychiatric medicine, including education leading
13 to—

14 (A) an undergraduate degree;

15 (B) a degree of doctor of medicine; or

16 (C) a degree of doctor of osteopathy; and

17 (2) were obtained from any of the following:

18 (A) A governmental entity.

19 (B) A private financial institution.

20 (C) An institution of higher education.

21 (D) Any other entity as specified the Sec-
22 retary for purposes of the pilot program.

23 (b) ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS.—

1 (1) IN GENERAL.—Subject to paragraph (2), an
2 individual eligible for participation in the pilot pro-
3 gram is an individual who—

4 (A) either—

5 (i) is licensed or eligible for licensure
6 to practice psychiatric medicine in the Vet-
7 erans Health Administration of the De-
8 partment of Veterans Affairs; or

9 (ii) is enrolled in the final year of a
10 residency program leading to a specialty
11 qualification in psychiatric medicine that is
12 approved by the Accreditation Council for
13 Graduate Medical Education; and

14 (B) demonstrates a commitment to a long-
15 term career as a psychiatrist in the Veterans
16 Health Administration, as determined by the
17 Secretary.

18 (2) PROHIBITION ON SIMULTANEOUS ELIGI-
19 BILITY.—An individual who is participating in any
20 other program of the Federal Government that re-
21 pays the educational loans of the individual is not el-
22 igible to participate in the pilot program.

23 (c) SELECTION.—The Secretary shall select not less
24 than 10 individuals described in subsection (b) to partici-

1 pate in the pilot program for each year in which the Sec-
2 retary carries out the pilot program.

3 (d) PERIOD OF OBLIGATED SERVICE.—The Sec-
4 retary shall enter into an agreement with each individual
5 selected under subsection (c) in which such individual
6 agrees to serve a period of obligated service for the Vet-
7 erans Health Administration in the field of psychiatric
8 medicine, as determined by the Secretary for purposes of
9 the pilot program, in exchange for the repayment of the
10 loan or loans of such individual under the pilot program.

11 (e) LOAN REPAYMENTS.—

12 (1) AMOUNTS.—Subject to paragraph (2), a
13 loan repayment under this section may consist of
14 payment of the principal, interest, and related ex-
15 penses of a loan obtained by an individual who is
16 participating in the pilot program for all educational
17 expenses (including tuition, fees, books, and labora-
18 tory expenses) of such individual relating to edu-
19 cation described in subsection (a)(1).

20 (2) LIMIT.—For each year of obligated service
21 that an individual who is participating in the pilot
22 program agrees to serve under subsection (d), the
23 Secretary may pay not more than \$120,000 in loan
24 repayment on behalf of such individual.

25 (f) BREACH.—

1 (1) LIABILITY.—An individual who participates
2 in the pilot program and fails to satisfy the period
3 of obligated service under subsection (d) shall be lia-
4 ble to the United States, in lieu of such obligated
5 service, for the amount that has been paid or is pay-
6 able to or on behalf of the individual under the pilot
7 program, reduced by the proportion that the number
8 of days served for completion of the period of obli-
9 gated service bears to the total number of days in
10 the period of obligated service of such individual.

11 (2) REPAYMENT PERIOD.—Any amount of dam-
12 ages that the United States is entitled to recover
13 under this subsection shall be paid to the United
14 States not later than one year after the date of the
15 breach of the agreement.

16 (g) REPORTS.—

17 (1) INITIAL REPORT.—

18 (A) IN GENERAL.—Not later than two
19 years after the date on which the pilot program
20 under subsection (a) commences, the Secretary
21 shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Af-
22 fairs of the Senate and the Committee on Vet-
23 erans' Affairs of the House of Representatives
24 a report on the pilot program.

1 (B) ELEMENTS.—The report required by
2 subparagraph (A) shall include the following:

3 (i) The number of individuals who
4 participated in the pilot program.

5 (ii) The locations in which such indi-
6 viduals were employed by the Department,
7 including how many such locations were
8 rural or urban locations.

9 (iii) An assessment of the quality of
10 the work performed by such individuals in
11 the course of such employment.

12 (iv) The number of psychiatrists the
13 Secretary determines is needed by the De-
14 partment in the future.

15 (2) INTERIM REPORT.—Not later than 90 days
16 after the date on which the pilot program terminates
17 under subsection (i), the Secretary shall submit to
18 the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate
19 and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the
20 House of Representatives an update to the report
21 submitted under paragraph (1).

22 (3) FINAL REPORT.—Not later than one year
23 after the date on which the pilot program terminates
24 under subsection (i), the Secretary shall submit to
25 the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate

1 and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the
2 House of Representatives a report specifying the
3 number of individuals who participated in the pilot
4 who are still employed by the Department as of the
5 date of submittal of the report.

6 (h) REGULATIONS.—The Secretary shall prescribe
7 regulations to carry out this section, including standards
8 for qualified loans and authorized payees and other terms
9 and conditions for the making of loan repayments.

10 (i) TERMINATION.—The authority to carry out the
11 pilot program shall expire on the date that is three years
12 after the date on which the Secretary commences the pilot
13 program.

14 **SEC. 6. REVIEW OF STAFFING REQUIREMENTS FOR STATE**
15 **DIRECTORS OF PSYCHOLOGICAL HEALTH.**

16 (a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 540 days after the
17 date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Defense
18 shall submit to the appropriate committees of Congress
19 a report detailing the results of a review, conducted in co-
20 ordination with the Chief of the National Guard Bureau,
21 of the staffing requirements for individual State National
22 Guard Commands with respect to Directors of Psycho-
23 logical Health.

1 (b) APPROPRIATE COMMITTEES OF CONGRESS DE-
2 FINED.—In this section, the term “appropriate commit-
3 tees of Congress” means—

4 (1) the Committee on Armed Services and the
5 Committee on Veterans’ Affairs of the Senate; and

6 (2) the Committee on Armed Services and the
7 Committee on Veterans’ Affairs of the House of
8 Representatives.

9 **SEC. 7. COLLABORATION ON SUICIDE PREVENTION EF-**
10 **FORTS BETWEEN THE DEPARTMENT OF VET-**
11 **ERANS AFFAIRS AND NON-PROFIT MENTAL**
12 **HEALTH ORGANIZATIONS.**

13 (a) COLLABORATION.—The Secretary of Veterans Af-
14 fairs may collaborate with non-profit mental health orga-
15 nizations to prevent suicide among veterans as follows:

16 (1) To improve the efficiency and effectiveness
17 of suicide prevention efforts carried out by the De-
18 partment of Veterans Affairs and non-profit mental
19 health organizations.

20 (2) To assist non-profit mental health organiza-
21 tions with the suicide prevention efforts of those or-
22 ganizations through the use of the expertise of em-
23 ployees of the Department.

24 (3) To jointly carry out suicide prevention ef-
25 forts.

1 (b) EXCHANGE OF RESOURCES.—In carrying out any
2 collaboration under subsection (a), the Secretary and any
3 non-profit mental health organization with which the Sec-
4 retary is collaborating under such subsection shall ex-
5 change training sessions, best practices, and other re-
6 sources to help with the suicide prevention efforts of the
7 Department and such organization.

8 (c) DIRECTOR OF SUICIDE PREVENTION COORDINA-
9 TION.—The Secretary shall select within the Department
10 a Director of Suicide Prevention Coordination to under-
11 take any collaboration with non-profit mental health orga-
12 nizations under this section or any other provision of law.