

119TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. _____

To require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to establish the Veteran Family Resource Program, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

Mrs. MURRAY (for herself, Mr. BOOZMAN, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Ms. MURKOWSKI, Mr. SANDERS, Mr. BOOKER, Mr. SCHIFF, Mr. DURBIN, Mr. KAINE, and Mr. WELCH) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on _____

A BILL

To require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to establish the Veteran Family Resource Program, 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,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Helping Heroes Act”.

5 **SEC. 2. ESTABLISHMENT OF VETERAN FAMILY RESOURCE**
6 **PROGRAM.**

7 (a) ESTABLISHMENT.—

8 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Veterans
9 Affairs shall, acting through the Under Secretary for

1 Health and the Office of Patient Care Services and
2 Care Management and Social Work Services of the
3 Veterans Health Administration, establish a pro-
4 gram—

5 (A) to enhance the resilience, health, and
6 well-being of veterans by addressing social de-
7 terminants of health challenges experienced in
8 their family units through person-centered clin-
9 ical integrations, connections to benefits fur-
10 nished by the Department of Veterans Affairs,
11 and community resource engagement; and

12 (B) to ensure veterans and their families
13 have access to a continuum of services and re-
14 sources needed to support wellness within their
15 family units as they define the family units.

16 (2) DESIGNATION.—The program established
17 pursuant to paragraph (1) shall be known as the
18 “Veteran Family Resource Program” (in this section
19 referred to as the “Program”).

20 (b) FAMILY COORDINATORS AND STAFFING.—

21 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall carry
22 out the Program by, not later than the date that is
23 five years after the date of the enactment of this
24 Act—

1 (A) appointing at least one family coordi-
2 nator in each Veterans Integrated Service Net-
3 work; and

4 (B) ensuring adequate staffing and re-
5 sources to ensure family coordinators are able
6 to carry out their functions and duties under
7 the Program.

8 (2) FUNCTIONS.—The functions of a family co-
9 ordinator under paragraph (1) are as follows:

10 (A) To serve at medical centers of the De-
11 partment as point persons who understand and
12 have a good working knowledge of—

13 (i) all resources that families, care-
14 givers, and survivors may be eligible for
15 under provisions of law administered by
16 the Secretary; and

17 (ii) community resources available to
18 such families, caregivers, and survivors
19 when they have needs that are not met by
20 the resources described in clause (i).

21 (B) To help veterans, their families, their
22 caregivers, and their survivors access and navi-
23 gate the public and private resources described
24 in subparagraph (A).

1 (3) DUTIES.—Each family coordinator ap-
2 pointed under paragraph (1) shall, to the extent
3 practicable—

4 (A) assess the needs of veterans and the
5 family members of veterans using evidence-
6 based strategies;

7 (B) build positive relationships with vet-
8 erans and such family members;

9 (C) refer veterans and such family mem-
10 bers to local, State, Federal, and non-Depart-
11 ment resources to support the overall health,
12 well-being, and treatment goals of such vet-
13 erans; and

14 (D) develop and maintain a list of—

15 (i) supportive services offered by the
16 Department; and

17 (ii) supportive services offered by non-
18 Department providers;

19 (c) GOALS AND METRICS.—

20 (1) GOALS.—The goals of the Program shall be
21 as follows:

22 (A) To connect veterans to family re-
23 sources to increase their well-being and resil-
24 iency.

1 (B) To develop internal partnerships to im-
2 prove health care furnished by the Department.

3 (C) To capture and maintain data to en-
4 hance understanding of process improvement
5 opportunities and impact.

6 (D) To function as a community liaison to
7 bolster existing partnerships and conduct due
8 diligence to form new partnerships.

9 (2) METRICS.—The Secretary shall establish
10 metrics for assessment of the Program, including
11 metrics relating to the following:

12 (A) Department referrals into the Pro-
13 gram.

14 (B) Non-Department referrals into the
15 Program.

16 (C) Health factors.

17 (D) Veteran and staff satisfaction.

18 (d) EXPANSION OF PROGRAM.—The Secretary may
19 expand the Program to additional medical centers of the
20 Department or otherwise expand the Program to carry out
21 the purposes specified in subsection (a)(1) as the Sec-
22 retary determines appropriate.

23 (e) REPORT TO CONGRESS.—

24 (1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than two years
25 after the commencement of the Program, the Sec-

1 retary shall submit to the appropriate committees of
2 Congress a report on the progress of the Program.

3 (2) CONTENTS.—The report required by para-
4 graph (1) shall include—

5 (A) the number of veterans and children
6 who received supportive services under the Pro-
7 gram;

8 (B) the demographic data of veterans and
9 family members in receipt of supportive services
10 under the Program, including—

11 (i) the relationship to the veteran;

12 (ii) age;

13 (iii) race;

14 (iv) ethnicity;

15 (v) gender;

16 (vi) disability; and

17 (vii) English proficiency and whether
18 a language other than English is spoken at
19 home;

20 (C) a summary of the supportive services
21 carried out under the Program and the costs to
22 the Department of such supportive services; and

23 (D) an assessment, measured by a survey
24 of participants, of whether, and how, participa-
25 tion in the Program—

1 (i) resulted in positive outcomes for
2 veterans and children; and

3 (ii) contributed to the overall health,
4 well-being, and treatment goals of the vet-
5 eran.

6 (3) APPROPRIATE COMMITTEES OF CONGRESS
7 DEFINED.—In this subsection, the term “appro-
8 priate committees of Congress” means—

9 (A) the Committee on Veterans’ Affairs
10 and the Subcommittee on Military Construc-
11 tion, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies of
12 the Committee on Appropriations of the Senate;
13 and

14 (B) the Committee on Veterans’ Affairs
15 and the Subcommittee on Military Construc-
16 tion, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies of
17 the Committee on Appropriations of the House
18 of Representatives.

19 (f) SUPPORTIVE SERVICES DEFINED.—In this sec-
20 tion, the term “supportive services” means services that
21 address the social, emotional, and mental health, career-
22 readiness, and other needs of children, including—

23 (1) wellness services, including mental, emo-
24 tional, behavioral, and physical health;

25 (2) peer-support programs for children; and

1 (3) any other services or activities the Secretary
2 considers appropriate to support the needs of chil-
3 dren.

4 **SEC. 3. SURVEY OF DISABLED VETERANS AND THEIR FAMI-**
5 **LIES.**

6 (a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than one year after the
7 date of the enactment of this Act, and not less frequently
8 than once every five years thereafter as the Secretary of
9 Veterans Affairs determines appropriate, the Secretary
10 shall conduct a survey of disabled veterans and their fami-
11 lies to identify and better understand the needs of such
12 disabled veterans and their families.

13 (b) CONTENT.—The survey required under sub-
14 section (a) shall include questions with respect to—

15 (1) the types and quality of support disabled
16 veterans receive for their children; and

17 (2) the unmet needs of such children.

18 **SEC. 4. NONDISCRIMINATION.**

19 The following provisions of law shall apply to any pro-
20 gram or activity that receives funds provided under this
21 Act:

22 (1) Title IX of the Education Amendments of
23 1972 (20 U.S.C. 1681 et seq.).

24 (2) Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (42
25 U.S.C. 2000d et seq.).

1 (3) Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of
2 1973 (29 U.S.C. 794).

3 (4) The Americans with Disabilities Act of
4 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12101 et seq.).

5 (5) The Age Discrimination Act of 1975 (42
6 U.S.C. 6101 et seq.).

7 (6) Any other Federal law prohibiting discrimi-
8 nation under an applicable program or activity re-
9 ceiving Federal financial assistance.