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**SUBSTITUTE HOUSE BILL 1181**

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**State of Washington**

**67th Legislature**

**2021 Regular Session**

**By** House Housing, Human Services & Veterans (originally sponsored by Representatives Orwall, Boehnke, Callan, Leavitt, Davis, Dolan, Valdez, Young, Riccelli, Lekanoff, Barkis, Peterson, Shewmake, Bronoske, Macri, and Morgan)

READ FIRST TIME 02/01/21.

1 AN ACT Relating to establishing programs and measures to prevent  
2 suicide among veterans and military members; amending RCW 43.70.445;  
3 adding new sections to chapter 43.60A RCW; adding a new section to  
4 chapter 18.130 RCW; adding a new section to chapter 46.18 RCW; adding  
5 a new section to chapter 43.216 RCW; adding a new section to chapter  
6 74.04 RCW; adding a new section to chapter 9.41 RCW; creating a new  
7 section; providing an expiration date; and declaring an emergency.

8 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

9 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** (1) Suicide is a public health issue that  
10 affects many Washington families and communities daily. Over the last  
11 10 years, Washington state has been at the forefront of suicide  
12 prevention, investing more in upstream suicide prevention strategies  
13 and supports with the goal of reducing suicide by 20 percent by 2025.

14 (2) At the request of the governor, in 2020 Washington  
15 stakeholders engaged in a national and statewide initiative to end  
16 veteran and military member suicide. This initiative culminated in a  
17 new state plan to educate providers and help them address the unique  
18 needs of veterans and military members, particularly those in  
19 transition to civilian life; and to provide resources and supports  
20 including improved lethal means safety training. The purpose of this  
21 act is to support the implementation of that plan.

1 (3) Service members, veterans, and their families are at a higher  
2 risk of being affected by suicide as experiences prior to enlistment,  
3 during service, and transition from service can contribute to  
4 suicidal thoughts and behaviors.

5 (4) Washington is home to 544,290 veterans, 60,699 active duty  
6 service members, 17,941 guard and reserve service members, and  
7 2,000,000 military and veteran family members. Although veterans  
8 themselves make up only seven percent of the Washington population,  
9 they account for 19 percent of total suicides in the state. Nearly  
10 1,000 veterans have died by suicide in Washington state over the last  
11 five years. More than two-thirds of veterans who died by suicide in  
12 Washington used a firearm.

13 (5) Family members of veterans who die by suicide are at higher  
14 risk for future suicide due to the exposure of experiencing suicide  
15 loss. Research shows for every suicide that occurs, 135 people suffer  
16 from the effects either directly or indirectly, meaning veteran  
17 suicides impact a community of 2,600,000 people.

18 (6) There is no one path to suicide, but life experiences, moral  
19 injury, trauma, culture, and health can play a major role in suicidal  
20 behavior. Military and veteran culture in particular includes stigma  
21 around mental wellness and help-seeking behavior, emphasizes  
22 reliability on group cohesion, and facilitates access,  
23 comfortability, and familiarity with lethal means such as firearms.  
24 Additionally, a significant number of veterans do not seek care  
25 within the veterans administration system.

26 (7) The legislature intends to address the tragedy of suicide  
27 amongst veterans, military members, and their families through  
28 support of professionals and community and peer organizations serving  
29 veterans, cultural changes that support help-seeking behaviors, and  
30 investments in education, training, prevention, and care.

31 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 43.60A  
32 RCW to read as follows:

33 (1) There is created in the department a suicide prevention  
34 community-based services grant program. The purpose of the grant  
35 program is to provide suicide prevention, peer support, and other  
36 assistance to at-risk and transitioning veterans and military members  
37 and their families in their communities.

38 (2) Subject to the availability of amounts appropriated for the  
39 specific purposes provided in this section and amounts disbursed from

1 the veterans and military members suicide prevention account created  
2 in section 3 of this act, the department, in consultation with the  
3 University of Washington, must establish a process to receive,  
4 review, process, and award grants to organizations, including  
5 nonprofit and peer support community programs, that address veterans,  
6 military members, and their families who may be at risk of suicide  
7 and other mental health crises. Priority should be given to  
8 organizations using peer support models that use evidence-based,  
9 research-based, or promising practices.

10 (3) The department shall report to the legislature annually  
11 beginning July 1, 2022, on grant recipients, number of veterans and  
12 military members served, and the types of services offered by grant  
13 recipients.

14 (4) The University of Washington shall evaluate the effectiveness  
15 of each grant program recipient providing suicide prevention and peer  
16 support services to veterans, military members, and their families  
17 who may be at risk of suicide and other mental health crises.

18 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** A new section is added to chapter 43.60A  
19 RCW to read as follows:

20 (1) The veterans and military members suicide prevention account  
21 is created in the custody of the state treasurer. The account shall  
22 consist of funds appropriated by the legislature, revenues received  
23 from the prevent veteran suicide emblem under section 8 of this act,  
24 and all receipts from gifts, grants, bequests, devises, or other  
25 donations from public and private sources to support veterans and  
26 military members suicide prevention measures. Expenditures from the  
27 account may be used only for the purposes provided in subsection (3)  
28 of this section. Only the director or the director's designee may  
29 authorize expenditures from the account. The account is subject to  
30 allotment procedures under chapter 43.88 RCW, but an appropriation is  
31 not required for expenditures.

32 (2) (a) The department may request and accept nondedicated  
33 contributions, grants, or gifts in cash or otherwise, and voluntary  
34 donations for deposit into the account, including funds generated by  
35 voluntary donations under (b) of this subsection.

36 (b) The department may accept, for deposit into the account,  
37 voluntary donations from persons who are: (i) Applying for a  
38 concealed pistol license or renewal of a concealed pistol license; or  
39 (ii) undergoing a background check under chapter 9.41 RCW in

1 connection with the purchase of a firearm from a firearms dealer. The  
2 department shall coordinate with local law enforcement agencies, the  
3 department of licensing, and firearms dealers licensed under chapter  
4 9.41 RCW to develop a form and process for publicizing and collecting  
5 voluntary donations under this subsection. The department and the  
6 department of licensing shall post educational information regarding  
7 the voluntary donation provisions of this section on their websites.

8 (3) All moneys deposited into the account must be used for  
9 activities that are dedicated to the benefit of veteran and military  
10 member suicide education and prevention including, but not limited  
11 to: (a) Expanding the department's peer corps program; and (b)  
12 providing programs, peer support, and services that assist veterans  
13 and military members in addressing mental health and wellness impacts  
14 of military service, trauma, moral injury, and transition to civilian  
15 life. Funds may also be used for the suicide prevention community-  
16 based services grant program established in section 3 of this act.  
17 Funds from the account may not be used to supplant existing funds  
18 received by the department nor shall grant recipients use the funds  
19 to supplant existing funding.

20 (4) For the purposes of this section the following definitions  
21 apply:

22 (a) "Veteran" has the same meaning as provided in RCW 41.04.005  
23 and 41.04.007.

24 (b) "Military members" means actively serving members of the  
25 national guard or reserves, or active duty military personnel.

26 (c) "Account" means the veterans and military members suicide  
27 prevention account.

28 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 4.** A new section is added to chapter 43.60A  
29 RCW to read as follows:

30 Beginning December 2021, subject to the availability of amounts  
31 appropriated for this specific purpose, the governor's challenge team  
32 and service members, veterans, and their families suicide prevention  
33 advisory committee shall report to the legislature on a biannual  
34 basis regarding implementation of the plan developed by the  
35 committee.

36 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 5.** A new section is added to chapter 43.60A  
37 RCW to read as follows:

1 Subject to the availability of amounts appropriated for this  
2 specific purpose, the department shall:

3 (1) Create and maintain a database of information on nonprofit,  
4 for-profit, city, county, state, and federal organizations,  
5 providers, and resources that address the mental health, well-being,  
6 and suicide prevention of veterans, military members, and their  
7 families. The department shall establish criteria for inclusion in  
8 the database by July 1, 2021. The department must make the database  
9 accessible on its website to veterans, military members, and their  
10 families by July 1, 2022;

11 (2) Provide suicide prevention education training and information  
12 for veterans, military members, and their families that is accessible  
13 through the internet; and

14 (3) By December 1, 2022, create, in consultation with the  
15 suicide-safer homes task force, a web-based application to be shared  
16 by state agencies and primary care providers with veterans, military  
17 members, and their families to provide applicable information and  
18 resources including but not limited to benefits, mental health  
19 resources, and lethal means safety information.

20 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 6.** A new section is added to chapter 18.130  
21 RCW to read as follows:

22 (1) Subject to the availability of amounts appropriated for this  
23 specific purpose, the department shall consult with the department of  
24 veterans affairs to create educational materials informing health  
25 care providers regulated under this chapter about the availability of  
26 the nationwide 988 phone number for individuals in crisis to connect  
27 with suicide prevention and mental health crisis counselors. The  
28 educational materials must include information about the veterans  
29 crisis line for veterans and service members, and, beginning July 1,  
30 2022, information about the resources developed under section 5 of  
31 this act.

32 (2) The department shall:

33 (a) Determine the health professions to which this section shall  
34 apply; and

35 (b) Collaborate with the corresponding disciplining authority  
36 under RCW 18.130.020 to ensure that the educational materials are  
37 distributed electronically to appropriate licensed health care  
38 providers when a provider renews his or her license.

1 (3) Beginning July 1, 2022, all health care providers are  
2 strongly encouraged to inquire with new patients entering care  
3 whether the patient is a veteran, member of the military, or a family  
4 member of a veteran or member of the military. If the patient  
5 responds in the affirmative, the provider is encouraged to share the  
6 educational materials created under this section with the patient.

7 **Sec. 7.** RCW 43.70.445 and 2019 c 415 s 967 are each amended to  
8 read as follows:

9 (1)(a) Subject to the availability of amounts appropriated for  
10 this specific purpose, a suicide-safer homes task force is  
11 established to raise public awareness and increase suicide prevention  
12 education among new partners who are in key positions to help reduce  
13 suicide. The task force shall be administered and staffed by the  
14 University of Washington (~~school of social work~~). To the extent  
15 possible, the task force membership should include representatives  
16 from geographically diverse and priority populations, including  
17 tribal populations.

18 (b) The suicide-safer homes task force comprises a suicide  
19 prevention and firearms subcommittee and a suicide prevention and  
20 health care subcommittee, as follows:

21 (i) The suicide prevention and firearms subcommittee shall  
22 (~~consist of the following members and~~) be cochaired by the  
23 University of Washington (~~school of social work and a member~~  
24 ~~identified in (b) (i) (A) of this subsection (1):~~

25 ~~(A) A representative of the national rifle association and a~~  
26 ~~representative of the second amendment foundation;~~

27 ~~(B))~~ and a representative of the department of veterans affairs,  
28 a representative of the national rifle association, or a  
29 representative of the Second Amendment foundation. The subcommittee  
30 shall also consist of the following members:

31 (A) Two representatives of suicide prevention organizations,  
32 selected by the cochairs of the subcommittee;

33 ~~((C))~~ (B) Two representatives of the firearms industry,  
34 selected by the cochairs of the subcommittee;

35 ~~((D))~~ (C) Two individuals who are suicide attempt survivors or  
36 who have experienced suicide loss, selected by the cochairs of the  
37 subcommittee;

38 ~~((E))~~ (D) Two representatives of law enforcement agencies,  
39 selected by the cochairs of the subcommittee;

1           ~~((F))~~ (E) One representative from the department of health;

2           ~~((G))~~ (F) One ~~((representative from the department of veterans~~  
3 ~~affairs, and one other))~~ individual representing veterans ~~((to be~~  
4 ~~selected by the cochairs of the subcommittee))~~; ~~((and~~  
5 ~~(H))~~ (G) One member of a Washington or federally recognized  
6 Indian tribe;

7           (H) Two veterans; and

8           (I) No more than ~~((two))~~ five other interested parties, selected  
9 by the cochairs of the subcommittee.

10           (ii) The suicide prevention and health care subcommittee shall  
11 consist of the following members and be cochaired by the University  
12 of Washington ~~((school of social work))~~ and a member identified in  
13 (b)(ii)(A) of this subsection (1):

14           (A) Two representatives of the Washington state pharmacy  
15 association;

16           (B) Two representatives of retailers who operate pharmacies,  
17 selected by the cochairs of the subcommittee;

18           (C) One faculty member from the University of Washington school  
19 of pharmacy and one faculty member from the Washington State  
20 University school of pharmacy;

21           (D) One representative of the department of health;

22           (E) One representative of the pharmacy quality assurance  
23 commission;

24           (F) Two representatives of the Washington state poison control  
25 center;

26           (G) One representative of the department of veterans affairs, and  
27 one other individual representing veterans to be selected by the  
28 cochairs of the subcommittee;

29           (H) Three members representing health care professionals  
30 providing suicide prevention training in the state, selected by the  
31 cochairs of the subcommittee; ~~((and))~~

32           (I) One member of a Washington or federally recognized Indian  
33 tribe; and

34           (J) No more than two other interested parties, selected by the  
35 cochairs of the subcommittee.

36           (c) The University of Washington ~~((school of social work))~~ shall  
37 convene the initial meeting of the task force.

38           (2) The task force shall:

1 (a) Develop and prepare to disseminate online trainings on  
2 suicide awareness and prevention for firearms dealers and their  
3 employees and firearm range owners and their employees;

4 (b) In consultation with the department of fish and wildlife,  
5 review the firearm safety pamphlet produced by the department of fish  
6 and wildlife under RCW 9.41.310 and, by January 1, 2017, recommend  
7 changes to the pamphlet to incorporate information on suicide  
8 awareness and prevention;

9 (c) Develop and approve suicide awareness and prevention messages  
10 for posters and brochures that are tailored to be effective for  
11 firearms owners for distribution to firearms dealers and firearms  
12 ranges;

13 (d) Develop suicide awareness and prevention messages for posters  
14 and brochures for distribution to pharmacies;

15 (e) In consultation with the department of fish and wildlife,  
16 develop strategies for creating and disseminating suicide awareness  
17 and prevention information for hunting safety classes, including  
18 messages to parents that can be shared during online registration, in  
19 either follow-up email communications, or in writing, or both;

20 (f) Develop suicide awareness and prevention messages for  
21 training for the schools of pharmacy and provide input on trainings  
22 being developed for community pharmacists;

23 (g) Create a website that will be a clearinghouse for the newly  
24 created suicide awareness and prevention materials developed by the  
25 task force;

26 (h) Conduct a survey of firearms dealers and firearms ranges in  
27 the state to determine the types and amounts of incentives that would  
28 be effective in encouraging those entities to participate in suicide-  
29 safer homes projects;

30 (i) Gather input on collateral educational materials that will  
31 help health care professionals in suicide prevention work; and

32 (j) Create, implement, and evaluate a suicide awareness and  
33 prevention pilot program in two counties, one rural and one urban,  
34 that have high suicide rates. The pilot program shall include:

35 (i) Developing and directing advocacy efforts with firearms  
36 dealers to pair suicide awareness and prevention training with  
37 distribution of safe storage devices;

38 (ii) Developing and directing advocacy efforts with pharmacies to  
39 pair suicide awareness and prevention training with distribution of  
40 medication disposal kits and safe storage devices;



1 (iii) Training health care providers on suicide awareness and  
2 prevention, paired with distribution of medication disposal kits and  
3 safe storage devices; and

4 (iv) Training local law enforcement officers on suicide awareness  
5 and prevention, paired with distribution of medication disposal kits  
6 and safe storage devices.

7 (3) The task force shall, in consultation with the department of  
8 health, develop and prioritize a list of projects to carry out the  
9 task force's purposes and submit the prioritized list to the  
10 department of health for funding from the suicide-safer homes project  
11 account created in RCW 43.70.446.

12 (4) Beginning December 1, 2016, the task force shall annually  
13 report to the legislature on the status of its work. The task force  
14 shall submit a final report by December 1, 2020, that includes the  
15 findings of the suicide awareness and prevention pilot program  
16 evaluation under subsection (2) of this section and recommendations  
17 on possible continuation of the program. The task force shall submit  
18 its reports in accordance with RCW 43.01.036.

19 (5) This section expires July 1, (~~2021~~) 2024.

20 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 8.** A new section is added to chapter 46.18  
21 RCW to read as follows:

22 (1) A prevent veteran suicide emblem shall be created and made  
23 available for purchase by the general public. The emblem is to be  
24 displayed on license plates in the manner described by the department  
25 of licensing, existing vehicular registration procedures, and current  
26 laws.

27 (2) The department of veterans affairs shall create the emblem,  
28 which must incorporate the 988 suicide prevention hotline within the  
29 emblem design, and submit the emblem to the department of licensing.

30 (3) Any person requesting a prevent veteran suicide emblem must  
31 pay a prescribed fee set by the department of licensing.

32 (4) Revenues from the prevent veteran suicide emblem must be  
33 deposited into the veterans and military members suicide prevention  
34 account created in section 3 of this act.

35 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 9.** A new section is added to chapter 43.216  
36 RCW to read as follows:

37 (1) The department shall, upon intake at point of service or  
38 application for service, inquire whether the applicant has ever

1 served in the United States armed forces or is a family or household  
2 member of someone who has ever served in the United States armed  
3 forces. If the applicant answers in the affirmative, the department  
4 shall provide the applicant with information on how to contact the  
5 Washington department of veterans affairs to inquire as to whether  
6 the applicant may be eligible for any benefits, services, or programs  
7 offered to veterans, military members, or their families.

8 (2) The department shall report nonidentifying comprehensive data  
9 collected in response to the inquiry made under subsection (1) of  
10 this section to the department of veterans affairs on an annual  
11 basis.

12 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 10.** A new section is added to chapter 74.04  
13 RCW to read as follows:

14 (1) During the application process for public assistance  
15 benefits, the department shall inquire of each applicant whether he  
16 or she has ever served in the United States military services or is a  
17 family or household member of someone who has ever served in the  
18 United States military services. If the applicant answers in the  
19 affirmative, the department shall provide the applicant with  
20 information on how to contact the Washington department of veterans  
21 affairs to inquire as to whether the applicant may be eligible for  
22 any benefits, services, or programs offered to veterans, military  
23 members, or their families.

24 (2) The department shall report nonidentifying comprehensive data  
25 collected in response to the inquiry made under subsection (1) of  
26 this section to the department of veterans affairs on an annual  
27 basis.

28 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 11.** A new section is added to chapter 9.41  
29 RCW to read as follows:

30 (1) In order to better prevent suicide by veterans, military  
31 members, and their families, an expansion of safe storage of firearms  
32 and reduced access to lethal means in the community is encouraged.

33 (2) A dealer who provides a service of allowing a person to  
34 temporarily store a firearm on the dealer's premises in a storage  
35 locker, box, or container that is locked and not accessible to the  
36 dealer does not thereby create a special relationship, for civil  
37 liability purposes, between the dealer and the person who temporarily  
38 stores the firearm on the dealer's premises.

1        NEW SECTION.    **Sec. 12.**    Section 7 of this act is necessary for  
2 the immediate preservation of the public peace, health, or safety, or  
3 support of the state government and its existing public institutions,  
4 and takes effect immediately.

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