

SB-85

Increase stipends and benefits for current or prospective Veterans Affairs mental health professionals (psychologists, psychiatrists, therapists, and social workers) in order to provide the highest quality of mental health care for our nations veterans.

IN THE SENATE OF THE AMERICAN LEGION BOYS NATION

Mr. Dong of Iowa introduced the following bill;

A BILL

Increase stipends and benefits for current or prospective Veterans Affairs mental health professionals (psychologists, psychiatrists, therapists, and social workers) in order to provide the highest quality of mental health care for our nations veterans.

Be it enacted by The American Legion Boys Nation Senate assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Veterans Affairs Mental Health Professionals Act".

SECTION 2. INCREASING STIPENDS AND BENEFITS FOR CURRENT AND PROSPECTIVE VETERANS AFFAIRS MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS.

(1) Increased stipends and benefits for military mental health professionals would address the current mental health provider crisis within the United States Veterans Affairs System by encouraging more highly talented students to obtain employment within the VA System;

(2) These stipends would include tuition coverage, increased overtime pay, and employment at VA Hospitals across the country;

(3) Funded by the United States Department of Defense, tuition coverage in this Act is defined as a yearly, renewable, full-tuition scholarship towards an undergraduate, medical school, or doctorate degree for interested and highly qualified students, with contractual obligations to pay off each year of tuition coverage with 1 corresponding year of VA Hospital employment;

(4) Increased overtime pay in this Act would require all United States VA Hospitals to compensate employed mental health professionals double the current hourly overtime rate for each hour of overtime worked, in order to decrease burnout symptoms amongst workers;

(5) For every year of tuition coverage used by prospective VA mental health providers as stated under this Act, the undersigned agrees to serve one corresponding year in any Veterans Affairs hospital across the country as a full employee of the United States federal government, with all responsibilities, risks, and benefits associated with their position;

(6) If, for any reason, a student under tuition coverage decides to drop out of the program in the middle of their studies, or decides not to matriculate as a VA mental health professional, they will be required to refund the entire cost of their tuition and fees paid for them by the United States Department of Defense.

SECTION 3. TERMINATION

(1) If enacted, this program will only be terminated if and only if the President of the United States decides that the mental health provider crisis within the Veterans Affairs System has been resolved, or;

(2) In the scenario the United States Department of Defense or Veterans Affairs System can no longer afford to fund the program to its entirety, this program will be put on hold, with the intention to begin again immediately when appropriate and sufficient funding is available.