



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION SERVICES
A Healthcare Service Agency

Dannel P. Malloy
Governor

Miriam Delphin-Rittmon Ph.D.
Commissioner

Memorandum:

TO: Members of the Veterans Affairs Committee

FROM: Commissioner Miriam Delphin-Rittmon, DMHAS

DATE: March 3, 2016

SUBJECT: Written Testimony on Senate Bill 263

Greetings, Senator Flexor, Representative Hennessey, and distinguished members of the Veterans Affairs Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony on SB 263-An Act Concerning Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Resources for Veterans and Members of the Armed Forces.

Thank you for raising a bill on this extremely important topic. Suicide prevention and mental health treatment for veterans is of the utmost importance for us. DMHAS has resources invested in suicide prevention that may eliminate the need for this bill which proposes a study regarding mental health and suicide prevention programs and services available to veterans and members of the armed forces in this state and make recommendations to state agencies, community organizations and nonprofit entities concerning allocation of resources.

The Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services has and continues to be committed to veteran's mental health. The Department currently runs the Military Support Program (MSP). The MSP provides an array of outpatient behavioral health services to Connecticut Service Members and their family members, including: intensive outreach and community case management services; outpatient counseling services through a statewide network of over 400 licensed private clinicians; information, referral and advocacy services to secure the right benefits and supports, right away; comprehensive deployment health education services that are available to veterans and their families, state and federal agencies, community-based organizations, and to citizens; and a statewide transportation system that provides livery services and gas cards to MSP participants.

This commitment to veterans does not end with the MSP programs. DMHAS currently works closely with the Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) via a memorandum of agreement on an intensive outpatient program on the DVA campus in Rocky Hill.

I highlight this commitment to veterans to help underscore our desire to work with veterans despite our lack of support for a study related to suicide prevention resources for veterans. DMHAS currently co-chairs the Connecticut Suicide Advisory Board, a network of diverse advocates, educators and leaders concerned with addressing the problem of suicide with a focus on prevention, intervention, and health and wellness promotion. This board includes membership representing the armed forces with an active Armed Forces Subcommittee chaired by a member of the CT National Guard Behavioral Health Unit. I invite you to visit PreventSuicideCT.org for more information on the Advisory Board.

The Advisory Board is able to provide information on mental health and suicide prevention resources and training on suicide prevention. With this resource available a study, which would involve deployment of scarce resources, may not be necessary,

Thank you for this opportunity to address this bill, continue the discussion on this important issue and to highlight some of the work we do for our state's veterans.