

2/14/19

## PROPOSED BILL NO. 543 BY SEN. KISSEL 7TH DISTRICT

## AN ACT REQUIRING HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE

## FOR EQUINE THERAPY FOR VETERANS

**Statement of Purpose:** To require health insurance coverage for equine therapy for veterans and the chapter 700c of the general statutes be amended to require health insurance coverage for equine therapy for veterans.

**Primum non nocere** (Classical Latin: [ˈpri:mõn no:n noˈkɛ:rɛ]) is a Latin phrase that means "first, to do no harm." The phrase is sometimes recorded as **primum nil nocere**.<sup>[1]</sup>

**Non-maleficence**, which is derived from the maxim, is one of the principal precepts of bioethics (ethics of medical & biological research) and that all medical students are taught in school and is a fundamental principle throughout the world. Another way to state it is that, "given an existing problem, it may be better not to do something, or even to do nothing, than to risk causing more harm than good." It reminds physicians to consider the possible harm that any intervention might do. It is invoked when debating the use of an intervention that carries an obvious risk of harm but a less certain chance of benefit.\*\*1

**CLASSICAL APPROACH DETRIMENTS:**

- Thus far in the treatment of PTSD and related mental issues via, medical psychotherapy and prescriptive applications have not proven to be the silver bullet as the the panacea for treating this disorder.
- Veterans have in many cases ceased or avoided the clinical approach due to its personally invasive but dispassionate structure.
- Veterans are proud of their service to or country and don't want the shame of being observed as a "mental patient"
- There is a reticence of the current Veteran PTSD population to participate in standard approaches or concern for opioid addiction leading to further risks of increased depression, isolation and suicide. This can result in self-medication through alcohol abuse
- Given the rate of returning Veterans, the PTSD syndrome is recognized as a growing epidemic

\*\*1ref: Wikipedia

**CLASSICAL APPROACH DETRIMENTS (CONT.):**

- Germane to the above are direct costs associated with treating PTSD which include psychotherapy and pharmacotherapy, but ancillary funding is needed for annual operating costs of salary, bonuses and incentives, additional staff, training and hiring costs, information technology requisites, admin charges.
- While traditional rehabilitation treatments have recorded varying success rates, they are assessed and monitored with electronic health records over a long period of time, but the readings do not really evaluate the Veterans' actual internal mental wellness barometer so critical to ascertaining actual "better quality of life rates.

**BENEFITS OF EQUINE THERAPY**

- Based on the organic nature of creating mutual respect synergy between human and equine and learned safety there is no harm in the approach. In fact the person who may have had a "fear" of such a large animal actually learn to relax, gain personal confidence and add a "trade" skill that can actually transfer to job opportunities or provide a basis for extension to horse ownership or equestrian sport pursuits.
- The only addictive aspect in equine therapy is that once the participant is acquiring a satisfying sense of improvement within the program is that they want to continue beyond the 6 week curriculum proving that there is true enjoyment while on the path to a sense of normalcy and mental equilibrium.
- Because the Veteran is immersed in the activity diversity sessions, they realize that they are contributing to the horses' welfare. This redefines the feeling of being a PTSD victim syndrome and thus can relinquish the shame or embarrassment association.
- The horses are the nurses and interpreters of the "patient's" temperament and with the groundwork equine therapy, the instructor guides and directs the participant to literally understand how the horse sees the world, intemperate its body language while forming a synergy of trust. Animals are not judgmental in the human sense and therefore the clinical/public PTSD stigma is absent from the equation.
- Veterans are proud to say that they are participating in the equestrian industry as it shows courage, its informative, it broadens their horizons and it has a "cachet" that elevates their personal esteem.
- The metrics of "success" are directly reflected in the verbiage provided by the veterans as they progress through the curriculum, provision of improvements in their personal relationships, professional development, reduction in depression and reliance on prescription drugs. These advantages are rhetorically offered by the Veterans and noted in their surveys submitted post the 6 week program and often shared during their sessions. The typical brain scans and repetitive psychiatric interviews which often only reinstate anxiety.
- Costs are reduced with fewer potential doctor/psychiatric visits, dependence on prescriptions and potential need for additional corrective measures should opioid/alcohol abuse occur. Overall, session costs are more cost efficient/effective than a medical office visit.

**SUMMARY**

- With the visibility of this program increased by the passage of the legislation on SB-543, more Veterans can be exposed to the opportunity for well-being and a better quality of life.
- Substantial savings can be realized with the introduction of this optional/supplemental approach to treating PTSD and related mental issues
- Overall feeling of accomplishment is normally evidenced by the third session via Veterans Lounge reviews prior and post each session
- ROI with a broad reach of the Veteran populations can be verified with a diversified source of participants. Thus, it will provide an on-going validation of this welcomed addition to the Veterans' healthcare coverage alternatives for PTSD challenges via a non-invasive, engaging, educating solution to relieving stress, despondency and risk of suicide of while increasing an overall desire re-engage in a successful life.