

117TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 5352

To direct the Secretary of Defense to carry out a pilot program to pre-program suicide prevention resources into smart devices issued to members of the Armed Forces.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SEPTEMBER 23, 2021

Mr. JOYCE of Ohio (for himself and Mr. PANETTA) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Armed Services

A BILL

To direct the Secretary of Defense to carry out a pilot program to pre-program suicide prevention resources into smart devices issued to members of the Armed Forces.

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 “Military Suicide Pre-
5 vention in the 21st Century Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress finds the following:

8 (1) Although personal electronic devices, such
9 as mobile phones, computers, and tablets, increas-

1 ingly are being leveraged as vehicles for health in the
2 civilian world, almost nothing is known about per-
3 sonal technology use among members of the Armed
4 Forces.

5 (2) The Defense Health Agency created the
6 Virtual Hope Box application to help members of
7 the Armed Forces build resilience.

8 (3) Users of the Virtual Hope Box application
9 reported significantly greater ability to cope with un-
10 pleasant emotions and thoughts.

11 (4) Members of the Armed Forces who are be-
12 havioral health patients experiencing distress, emo-
13 tional dysregulation, or suicidal ideation are often
14 separated from direct clinical support when they
15 need it.

16 (5) The Virtual Hope Box application offers a
17 highly portable, accessible, and discreet tool for ef-
18 fectively increasing coping self-efficacy.

19 (6) A strongly linked chain of care depends on
20 engaged leaders as well as highly competent first re-
21 sponders, crisis hotline workers, emergency depart-
22 ment personnel, chaplains, primary care clinicians,
23 and behavioral health clinicians.

1 **SEC. 3. PILOT PROGRAM ON PRE-PROGRAMMING OF SUI-**
2 **CIDE PREVENTION RESOURCES INTO SMART**
3 **DEVICES ISSUED TO MEMBERS OF THE**
4 **ARMED FORCES.**

5 (a) IN GENERAL.—Commencing not later than 120
6 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Sec-
7 retary of Defense shall carry out a pilot program under
8 which the Secretary—

9 (1) pre-downloads the Virtual Hope Box appli-
10 cation of the Defense Health Agency, or such suc-
11 cessor application, on smart devices individually
12 issued to members of the Armed Forces;

13 (2) pre-programs the National Suicide Hotline
14 number and Veterans Crisis Line number into the
15 contacts for such devices; and

16 (3) provides training, as part of training on sui-
17 cide awareness and prevention conducted throughout
18 the Department of Defense, on the preventative re-
19 sources described in paragraphs (1) and (2).

20 (b) DURATION.—The Secretary shall carry out the
21 pilot program under this section for a two-year period.

22 (c) SCOPE.—The Secretary shall determine the ap-
23 propriate scope of individuals participating in the pilot
24 program under this section to best represent each Armed
25 Force and to ensure a relevant sample size.

1 (d) IDENTIFICATION OF OTHER RESOURCES.—In
2 carrying out the pilot program under this section, the Sec-
3 retary shall coordinate with the Director of the Defense
4 Health Agency and the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to
5 identify other useful technology-related resources for use
6 in the pilot program.

7 (e) REPORT.—Not later than 30 days after com-
8 pleting the pilot program under this section, the Secretary
9 shall submit to the Committee on Armed Services of the
10 Senate and the Committee on Armed Services of the
11 House of Representatives a report on the pilot program.

12 (f) VETERANS CRISIS LINE DEFINED.—In this sec-
13 tion, the term “Veterans Crisis Line” means the toll-free
14 hotline for veterans established under section 1720F(h) of
15 title 38, United States Code.

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