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To: Military Affairs

HOUSE BILL NO. 1268

1 AN ACT TO CREATE THE MISSISSIPPI SAVE OUR SERVICE MEMBER TASK
2 FORCE; TO PROVIDE FOR THE MEMBERSHIP AND DUTIES OF THE TASK FORCE;
3 TO REQUIRE THE TASK FORCE TO SUBMIT A REPORT ON ITS FINDINGS AND
4 RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE LEGISLATURE BEFORE JANUARY 1, 2026; AND FOR
5 RELATED PURPOSES.

6 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI:

7 **SECTION 1.** (1) There is created the Mississippi Save Our
8 Service Member Task Force. The purpose of the task force is to
9 unite key stakeholders in order to assess the mental health needs
10 of military veterans and current members of the Mississippi
11 National Guard and to develop a strategic plan and proposed
12 legislation addressing mental health issues and the prevention of
13 suicide.

14 (2) The task force shall be composed of the following
15 fifteen (15) members:

16 (a) The Chairs of the House Military Affairs Committee
17 and the Senate Veterans and Military Affairs Committee, or their
18 designees from their respective committee membership;



19 (b) The Chairs of the House Public Health and Human
20 Services Committee and the Senate Public Health and Welfare
21 Committee, or their designees from their respective committee
22 membership;

23 (c) The Executive Director the State Department of
24 Health, or the director's designee;

25 (d) Two (2) psychiatrists experienced in treating
26 service members confronting mental health issues or suicidal
27 ideation, or both, with one (1) member being appointed by the
28 Governor and one (1) member being appointed by the Lieutenant
29 Governor;

30 (e) Two (2) chaplains in the Mississippi National
31 Guard, appointed by the Adjutant General;

32 (f) One (1) company grade military officer with command
33 experience, appointed by the Adjutant General;

34 (g) One (1) noncommissioned officer with first sergeant
35 experience, appointed by the senior enlisted advisor for the
36 Mississippi National Guard;

37 (h) One (1) field grade officer with battalion
38 commander experience, appointed by the Adjutant General;

39 (i) One (1) noncommissioned officer with commander
40 sergeant major experience, appointed by the senior enlisted
41 advisor for the Mississippi National Guard;

42 (j) One (1) employee of a university counseling center,
43 or a person otherwise responsible for coordinating or providing



student mental health services on campus, appointed by the Governor; and

(k) One (1) employee of a community mental health provider that provides services to veterans and service members, appointed by the Governor.

(3) The task force shall perform the following duties:

(a) Assess the needs of Mississippi's military force by gathering input from veterans and current National Guard members about mental health challenges and reviewing existing resources and identifying gaps in mental health support services and suicide prevention efforts;

(b) Consult with faculty and researchers at universities and colleges who are studying and researching the psychology of PTSD and traumatic brain injury, particularly in relation to service members' mental health and to suicide prevention efforts;

(c) Review and make recommendations on how to identify PTSD and suicidal ideation in veterans and current National Guard members and on methods to prevent suicide;

(d) Identify partnering opportunities that will lead to improved mental health services and suicide prevention efforts accessible to veterans and National Guard members;

(e) Identify ways to reduce mental health stigma by promoting education and awareness to veterans, National Guard members and their families, and the general public;



69 (f) Develop programs and policies to mitigate mental
70 health issues at the various military leadership levels;

71 (g) Formulate recommendations on changes to laws and
72 policy in the State of Mississippi which will create opportunities
73 for better identification of indicators signaling possible mental
74 health concerns and suicidal ideation among veterans and current
75 National Guard members; and

76 (h) Research and develop recommendations pertaining to
77 any other issues that, in the determination of the task force, are
78 relevant to improving mental health and suicide prevention
79 services available to veterans and current National Guard members.

80 (4) (a) Appointments to the task force must be made before
81 August 1, 2025. Before August 15, 2025, on a day to be designated
82 jointly by the legislative members of the task force, the task
83 force shall meet and organize by selecting from its membership a
84 chair and vice chair. The vice chair shall serve also as the
85 secretary and is responsible for keeping all records of the task
86 force. A majority of the members of the task force constitutes a
87 quorum. In the selection of its officers and the adoption of
88 rules, resolutions and reports, an affirmative vote of a majority
89 of the task force is required. Written notice of task force
90 meetings shall be sent electronically to all members at least
91 fifteen (15) days before the date on which a meeting is to be
92 held.



93 (b) The task force shall make a final report of its
94 findings and recommendations, including any recommended
95 legislation and funding needs, to the Legislature before January
96 1, 2026, at which time the task force will be dissolved.

97 (5) Members of the task force may not receive compensation
98 for their service on the task force.

99 (6) To effectuate the purposes of this act, upon the request
100 of the chair of the task force, a department, division, board,
101 bureau, committee, institution or agency of the state or a
102 political subdivision of the state shall provide the facilities,
103 assistance, information and data needed to enable the task force
104 to carry out its duties.

105 **SECTION 2.** This act shall take effect and be in force from
106 and after July 1, 2025.

