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To: Military Affairs

HOUSE BILL NO. 1268  
(As Sent to Governor)

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; TO  
5 CREATE THE MISSISSIPPI FIRST RESPONDER PTSD AND SUICIDE PREVENTION  
6 TASK FORCE; TO PROVIDE FOR THE MEMBERSHIP AND DUTIES OF THE TASK  
7 FORCE; TO REQUIRE THE TASK FORCE TO SUBMIT A REPORT ON ITS  
8 FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE LEGISLATURE BEFORE DECEMBER 1,  
9 2025; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

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

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



20 (a) The Chairs of the House Military Affairs Committee  
21 and the Senate Veterans and Military Affairs Committee, or their  
22 designees from their respective committee membership;

23 (b) The Chairs of the House Public Health and Human  
24 Services Committee and the Senate Public Health and Welfare  
25 Committee, or their designees from their respective committee  
26 membership;

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

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

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

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

38 (g) One (1) noncommissioned officer with first sergeant  
39 experience, appointed by the senior enlisted advisor for the  
40 Mississippi National Guard;

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



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

(j) One (1) employee of a university counseling center, 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;



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

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

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

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

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

84 (4) (a) Appointments to the task force must be made before  
85 August 1, 2025. Before August 15, 2025, on a day to be designated  
86 jointly by the legislative members of the task force, the task  
87 force shall meet and organize by selecting from its membership a  
88 chair and vice chair. The vice chair shall serve also as the  
89 secretary and is responsible for keeping all records of the task  
90 force. A majority of the members of the task force constitutes a  
91 quorum. In the selection of its officers and the adoption of



92 rules, resolutions and reports, an affirmative vote of a majority  
93 of the task force is required. Written notice of task force  
94 meetings shall be sent electronically to all members at least  
95 fifteen (15) days before the date on which a meeting is to be  
96 held.

97 (b) The task force shall make a final report of its  
98 findings and recommendations, including any recommended  
99 legislation and funding needs, to the Legislature before January  
100 1, 2026, at which time the task force will be dissolved.

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

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

109 **SECTION 2.** (1) There is created the Mississippi First  
110 Responder PTSD and Suicide Prevention Task Force. The purpose of  
111 the task force is to unite key stakeholders in order to assess the  
112 mental health needs of first responders and develop a strategic  
113 plan and proposed legislation. The task force shall review and  
114 make recommendations on how to identify PTSD and those  
115 contemplating suicide and on methods to prevent suicide for  
116 Mississippi's first responders. Additionally, this task force



will identify methods to effectively provide treatment for first responders. For the purposes of this section only, the term "first responders" includes law enforcement officers, fire fighters, 911 dispatchers, members of the Mississippi National Guard and emergency medical services.

(2) The task force shall be composed of the following twenty-one (21) members:

(a) Three (3) members of the Senate Public Health and Welfare Committee appointed by the chair of the committee;

(b) Three (3) members of the House Public Health and Human Services Committee appointed by the chair of the committee;

(c) One (1) employee of the State Department of Health appointed by the executive director;

(d) One (1) employee of the State Department of Mental Health appointed by the executive director;

(e) One (1) employee of the Mississippi Department of Human Services appointed by the executive director;

(f) The Medical Director and the Director of the Office of Standards and Training of the Department of Public Safety, or their respective designees;

(g) One (1) employee of the Office of the Attorney General appointed by the Attorney General;

(h) Two (2) members, who must be therapists, appointed by the First Responders of Mississippi organization;



(i) One (1) member of the Mississippi Association of Chiefs of Police appointed by the president;

(j) One (1) member of the Mississippi Sheriffs' Association appointed by the president;

(k) One (1) member of the Mississippi Fire Chiefs Association appointed by the president;

(l) One (1) member of the Professional Firefighters Association of Mississippi appointed by the president;

(m) One (1) member of the Mississippi Law Enforcement Officers Association appointed by the president;

(n) One (1) member of the Mississippi National Guard appointed by the Adjutant General of Mississippi; and

(o) One (1) employee of a member of the Mississippi Ambulance Alliance appointed by the president.

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

(a) Assess the needs of first responders by gathering input from first responders about mental health challenges and reviewing existing resources, and identify gaps in mental health support services;

(b) Develop a plan to address identified needs by creating a detailed plan for programs and services that will support first responders' mental health, and identify strategies to make mental health services accessible, affordable and effective;



165 (c) Foster collaboration among stakeholders by bringing  
166 together first responders, mental health professionals and  
167 policymakers to identify solutions and propose legislation;

168 (d) Identify ways to reduce mental health stigma by  
169 promoting education and awareness;

170 (e) Ensure oversight and sustainability of programs by  
171 establishing a system and recommending an agency or entity to  
172 monitor program effectiveness and make needed improvements, and to  
173 secure funding and resources in order to ensure programs can  
174 continue long-term; and

175 (f) Recommend relevant changes to Mississippi law and  
176 other state and local policies which can be implemented by state  
177 and local governmental entities.

178 (4) (a) Appointments to the task force must be made within  
179 thirty (30) days after the effective date of this act. Within  
180 fifteen (15) days thereafter, on a day to be designated jointly by  
181 the legislative members of the task force, the task force shall  
182 meet and organize by selecting from its membership a chair and  
183 vice chair. The vice chair shall serve also as the secretary and  
184 is responsible for keeping all records of the task force. A  
185 majority of the members of the task force constitutes a quorum.  
186 In the selection of its officers and the adoption of rules,  
187 resolutions and reports, an affirmative vote of a majority of the  
188 task force is required. Written notice of task force meetings



shall be sent electronically to all members at least fifteen (15) days before the date on which a meeting is to be held.

(b) The task force shall meet at least once monthly.

(c) The task force shall make a final report of its findings and recommendations, including any recommended legislation and any funding needs, to the Legislature before December 1, 2025, at which time the task force will be dissolved.

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

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

**SECTION 3.** This act shall take effect and be in force from and after July 1, 2025.

