

1 HOUSE BILL NO. 118

2 INTRODUCED BY J. WINDY BOY

3 BY REQUEST OF THE STATE ADMINISTRATION AND VETERANS' AFFAIRS INTERIM COMMITTEE

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5 A BILL FOR AN ACT ENTITLED: "AN ACT REVISING THE STATE SUICIDE PREVENTION PROGRAM;
6 CLARIFYING THE DUTIES OF THE SUICIDE PREVENTION OFFICER; PROVIDING AN APPROPRIATION;
7 AMENDING SECTION 53-21-1101, MCA; AND PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE."

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9 WHEREAS, the State Administration and Veterans' Affairs Interim Committee examined the high rate of
10 suicide in Montana among veterans;

11 WHEREAS, the committee learned that of the 555 suicides in Montana that occurred between January
12 1, 2014, and March 1, 2016, most suicides are by white males ages 35 through 64, that 121 were by veterans,
13 42 were by American Indians, and that 27 were by youth from 11 to 17 years of age; and

14 WHEREAS, after investigating the causes of suicide and the federal, state, and local efforts to prevent
15 suicide among veterans, the committee recognized that suicide prevention efforts must be aimed at all
16 demographic groups in Montana and accomplished using various media, especially digital and social media; and

17 WHEREAS, the committee voted unanimously to enhance Montana's current state suicide prevention
18 program by promoting a statewide, multimedia suicide prevention campaign for all ages, ethnic groups, and
19 occupations that would help normalize awareness about suicide risks and suicide prevention efforts.

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21 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MONTANA:

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23 **Section 1.** Section 53-21-1101, MCA, is amended to read:

24 **"53-21-1101. Suicide prevention officer -- duties.** (1) The department of public health and human
25 services shall implement a suicide prevention program by January 1, 2008. The program must be administered
26 by a suicide prevention officer attached to the office of the director of the department.

27 (2) The suicide prevention officer shall:

28 (a) coordinate all suicide prevention activities being conducted by the department, including activities
29 in the addictive and mental disorders division, the health resources division, and the public health and safety
30 division, and coordinate with any suicide prevention activities that are conducted by other state agencies,

1 including the office of the superintendent of public instruction, the department of corrections, the department of
2 military affairs, and the university system;

3 (b) develop a biennial suicide reduction plan that addresses reducing suicides by Montanans of all ages,
4 ethnic groups, and occupations;

5 (c) direct a statewide suicide prevention program with activities that include but are not limited to:

6 (i) conducting statewide public awareness campaigns aimed at normalizing the need for all Montanans
7 to address mental health problems and utilizing both paid and free media, including digital and social media, and
8 including input from government agencies, school representatives from elementary schools through higher
9 education, mental health advocacy groups, veteran groups, and other relevant nonprofit organizations;

10 (ii) initiating, in partnership with Montana's tribes and tribal organizations, a public awareness program
11 that is culturally appropriate and that utilizes the modalities best suited for Indian country;

12 (iii) seeking opportunities for research that will improve understanding of suicide in Montana and provide
13 increased suicide-related services;

14 (iv) training for medical professionals, military personnel, school personnel, social service providers, and
15 the general public on recognizing the early warning signs of suicidality, depression, and other mental illnesses;
16 and

17 (v) providing grants to communities or other government, nonprofit, or tribal entities to start new or
18 sustain existing suicide prevention activities."

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20 NEW SECTION. Section 2. Appropriation. There is appropriated \$500,000 from the general fund to
21 the department of public health and human services for the statewide suicide prevention program provided for
22 in 53-21-1101.

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24 NEW SECTION. Section 3. Notification to tribal governments. The secretary of state shall send a
25 copy of [this act] to each tribal government located on the seven Montana reservations and to the Little Shell
26 Chippewa tribe.

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28 NEW SECTION. Section 4. Effective date. [This act] is effective July 1, 2017.

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