

115TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

# H. R. 1712

To direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to establish a grant program to improve the monitoring of mental health and substance abuse treatment programs of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

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## IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MARCH 23, 2017

Mrs. ROBY (for herself, Ms. TITUS, Mr. WALZ, and Mr. ZELDIN) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs

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## A BILL

To direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to establish a grant program to improve the monitoring of mental health and substance abuse treatment programs of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

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 “Protection and Advo-  
5       cacy for Veterans Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. ESTABLISHMENT OF GRANT PROGRAM TO IMPROVE**  
2 **MONITORING OF MENTAL HEALTH AND SUB-**  
3 **STANCE ABUSE TREATMENT PROGRAMS OF**  
4 **DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.**

5 (a) ESTABLISHMENT.—The Secretary of Veterans  
6 Affairs shall establish a grant program to improve the  
7 monitoring of mental health and substance abuse treat-  
8 ment programs of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

9 (b) GRANTS.—

10 (1) MAIN GRANT.—

11 (A) AWARD.—In carrying out subsection  
12 (a), the Secretary shall award a grant to four  
13 protection and advocacy systems under which  
14 each protection and advocacy system shall carry  
15 out a demonstration project to investigate and  
16 monitor the care and treatment of veterans pro-  
17 vided pursuant to chapter 17 of title 38, United  
18 States Code, for mental illness or substance  
19 abuse issues at medical facilities of the Depart-  
20 ment.

21 (B) MINIMUM AMOUNT.—Each grant  
22 awarded under subparagraph (A) to a protec-  
23 tion and advocacy system shall be an amount  
24 that is not less than \$105,000 during each year  
25 that the protection and advocacy system carries

1 out a demonstration project described in such  
2 subparagraph under the grant program.

3 (2) COLLABORATION GRANT.—

4 (A) AWARD.—During each year in which a  
5 protection and advocacy system carries out a  
6 demonstration project under subparagraph (A)  
7 of such paragraph, the Secretary shall award a  
8 joint grant to a national organization with ex-  
9 tensive knowledge of the protection and advo-  
10 cacy system and a veterans service organization  
11 in the amount of \$80,000.

12 (B) COLLABORATION.—Each national or-  
13 ganization and veterans service organization  
14 that is awarded a joint grant under subpara-  
15 graph (A) shall use the grant to facilitate the  
16 collaboration between the national organization  
17 and the veterans service organization to—

18 (i) coordinate training and technical  
19 assistance for the protection and advocacy  
20 systems; and

21 (ii) provide for data collection, report-  
22 ing, and analysis in carrying out para-  
23 graph (1)(A).

24 (3) AUTHORITY.—In carrying out a demonstra-  
25 tion project under paragraph (1)(A), a protection

1 and advocacy system shall have the authorities pro-  
2 vided by section 105(a) of the Protection and Advo-  
3 cacy for Individuals with Mental Illness Act (42  
4 U.S.C. 10805(a)) with respect to a medical facility  
5 of the Department.

6 (c) SELECTION.—In selecting the four protection and  
7 advocacy system to receive grants under subsection  
8 (b)(1)(A), the Secretary shall consider the following cri-  
9 teria:

10 (1) Whether the protection and advocacy sys-  
11 tem has demonstrated monitoring and investigation  
12 experience, along with knowledge of the issues facing  
13 veterans with disabilities.

14 (2) Whether the State in which the protection  
15 and advocacy system operates—

16 (A) has low aggregated scores in the do-  
17 mains of mental health, performance, and ac-  
18 cess as rated by the Strategic Analytics Im-  
19 provement and Learning database system (com-  
20 monly referred to as “SAIL”); and

21 (B) to the extent practicable, is representa-  
22 tive of both urban and rural States.

23 (d) REPORTS.—The Secretary shall ensure that each  
24 protection and advocacy system participating in the grant  
25 program submits to the Secretary reports developed by the

1 protection and advocacy system relating to an investiga-  
2 tion or monitoring conducted pursuant to subsection  
3 (b)(1)(A). The Secretary shall designate an office of the  
4 Department of Veterans Affairs to receive each such re-  
5 port.

6 (e) DURATION; TERMINATION.—

7 (1) DURATION.—The Secretary shall carry out  
8 the grant program established under subsection (a)  
9 for a period of five years.

10 (2) TERMINATION.—The Secretary may termi-  
11 nate a demonstration project under subsection  
12 (b)(1)(A) before the five-year period described in  
13 paragraph (1) if the Secretary determines there is  
14 good cause for such termination. If the Secretary  
15 carries out such a termination, the Secretary shall  
16 award grants under subsection (b) to a new protec-  
17 tion and advocacy system.

18 (f) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is  
19 authorized to be appropriated to the Secretary to carry  
20 out the grant program under subsection (a) \$500,000 for  
21 each of fiscal years 2018 through 2022.

22 (g) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

23 (1) The term “protection and advocacy system”  
24 has the meaning given the term “eligible system” in  
25 section 102(2) of the Protection and Advocacy for

1 Individuals with Mental Illness Act (42 U.S.C.  
2 10802(2)).

3 (2) The term “State” means each of the several  
4 States, territories, and possessions of the United  
5 States, the District of Columbia, and the Common-  
6 wealth of Puerto Rico.

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