

SUBJECT: Establishing a veterans suicide prevention campaign

COMMITTEE: Defense & Veterans' Affairs — favorable, without amendment

VOTE: 7 ayes — Wilson, R. Lopez, Bumgarner, J. Garcia, Morales Shaw, Muñoz, Slaton

1 nay — Dorazio

1 absent — Frank

WITNESSES: For — William West, American Legion; Jorg Kitchen, VFW Texas; Denise Cooper (*Registered, but did not testify*: Lindsey Adams, City of El Paso; Drew DeBerry, Combined Arms; Adam Haynes, Conference of Urban Counties; Charles Reed, Dallas County Commissioners Court; Elisa M. Tamayo, El Paso County; Martin Hubert, Endeavors; Damian Cook, K9s for Warriors; Lyssette Galvan, NAMI Texas; Louie Sanchez, Texans For Greater Mental Health; Jim Brennan, Texas Coalition of Veterans Organizations; Nicole Golden, Texas Gun Sense; Jennifer Allmon, The Texas Catholic Conference of Bishops; Cicely Kay, Travis County Commissioners Court; Thomas Parkinson;)

Against — None

On — Dr. Blake Harris, Texas Veterans Commission

BACKGROUND: Some have suggested that veterans and their families would benefit from accessible suicide prevention education, particularly from a trusted source in the veteran community.

DIGEST: HB 671 would require the Texas Veterans Commission to conduct a suicide prevention campaign to provide veterans with information regarding suicide prevention. In conducting the suicide prevention campaign, the commission would be required to establish a dedicated website to provide information about safely storing firearms.

The commission would collaborate with, and could contract with, community-based, nonprofit, or private organizations to conduct the suicide prevention campaign. The commission could solicit and accept gifts and grants for purposes of conducting the campaign.

The Texas Veterans Commission would be required to establish and adopt any rules necessary to implement the campaign by March 1, 2024.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2023.