

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2021**

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**HOUSE BILL 370
Committee Substitute Favorable 4/21/21**

Short Title: No Veteran Left Behind Act.

(Public)

Sponsors:

Referred to:

March 24, 2021

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
AN ACT ESTABLISHING A PILOT PROGRAM TO EXPAND THE VETERANS JUSTICE
INTERVENTION PROGRAM AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS FOR THE PROGRAM.

Whereas, veterans suffer from unique mental health and substance abuse issues which may exceed the capabilities of many local communities, especially law enforcement; and

Whereas, the Veterans Justice Intervention (VJI) program works to avoid the unnecessary criminalization of mental illness and extended incarceration among veterans by ensuring that eligible, justice-involved veterans have timely access to Veterans Health Administration (VHA) services; and

Whereas, "justice-involved veterans" are veterans who have crisis encounters with law enforcement in the community, are jailed for relatively brief periods of time for offenses that do not result in prison time, and/or are adjudicated or monitored by either local criminal courts or specialty treatment courts, such as drug and mental health courts, usually for extended periods of time; and

Whereas, VJI Specialists provide direct outreach, assessment, and case management for justice-involved veterans in local courts and jails and liaison with local justice system partners. VJI Specialists also serve as a liaison to Veterans Treatment Courts, Crisis Intervention Teams in police departments, and probation and parole officers; and

Whereas, the VJI program also helps to prevent homelessness among justice-involved veterans; and

Whereas, a pilot program to evaluate the expansion of the VJI program in North Carolina would be beneficial to the State's veterans; Now, therefore,
The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

SECTION 1. There is appropriated from the General Fund to The Independence Fund, Inc., a nonprofit organization (Grantee) dedicated to improving the lives of veterans and their families, the sum of one million dollars (\$1,000,000) for the 2020-2021 fiscal year in nonrecurring funds as a directed grant to establish and implement a pilot program to expand the Veterans Justice Intervention (VJI) program by working with the following non-State entities: the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department and the Sheriff's Departments in Brunswick, Chatham, Craven, Cumberland, McDowell, Nash, Onslow, Union, and Wayne Counties. These grant funds may be used to hire or contract a subject matter expert for assessment, coordination, and VJI implementation in each of the designated departments.

SECTION 2. As a condition of the appropriation of these grant funds, the Grantee shall do the following in conducting the pilot program:

- (1) Partner with other nonprofits, State and local governments, and federal agencies to develop and assess each county's initial response to veterans in



- 1 crises and conclude with an updated data collection process map developed
- 2 for each county.
- 3 (2) Educate first responders, local community support employees, and others on
- 4 veteran-specific crisis intervention, suicide prevention, and VA resources
- 5 available.
- 6 (3) Execute new training plans based on the data collection process maps
- 7 developed for each county.
- 8 (4) Monitor the pilot program and maintain regular contact with each county to
- 9 ensure up-to-date training and availability and allocation of resources.
- 10 (5) By June 30, 2022, report on the effectiveness of the pilot program, including
- 11 the feasibility of expanding the program throughout the State, to the Joint
- 12 Legislative Committees on General Government and Justice and Public Safety
- 13 and the Fiscal Research Division.

14 **SECTION 3.(a)** For purposes of this act, the following definitions apply:

- 15 (1) Directed grant. – Nonrecurring funds allocated by a State agency to a
- 16 non-State entity or grantee as directed by an act of the General Assembly.
- 17 (2) Grantee. – As defined in G.S. 143C-6-23(a)(2).
- 18 (3) Non-State entity. – As defined in G.S. 143C-1-1(d)(18).

19 **SECTION 3.(b)** The directed grant appropriated in this act is subject to the
20 following:

- 21 (1) The provisions of G.S. 143C-6-23 apply.
- 22 (2) The directed grant shall be disbursed in a single payment by no later than 30
- 23 days after the effective date of this act.
- 24 (3) Notwithstanding any provision of G.S. 143C-1-2(b) to the contrary, the
- 25 nonrecurring funds appropriated in this act as a directed grant do not revert on
- 26 June 30, 2021.
- 27 (4) The directed grant is for nonsectarian, nonreligious purposes only.

28 **SECTION 4.** This act shall be known, and may be cited, as the "No Veteran Left
29 Behind Act."

30 **SECTION 5.** This act is effective when it becomes law.