

119TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. _____

To improve support for personnel of the Veterans Crisis Line and to clarify
authorities relating to crisis response protocols, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

_____ introduced the following bill; which was read twice
and referred to the Committee on _____

A BILL

To improve support for personnel of the Veterans Crisis
Line and to clarify authorities relating to crisis response
protocols, and for other purposes.

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 “Veterans Crisis Line
5 Support and Safety Act of 2026”.

6 **SEC. 2. SUPPORT FOR VETERANS CRISIS LINE.**

7 (a) MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS SUPPORT FOR
8 WORKFORCE.—

9 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Veterans
10 Affairs shall ensure that covered personnel have ac-

1 cess to confidential mental health services, at no cost
2 to the covered personnel, including—

3 (A) access to individual counseling and
4 mental health care services from licensed pro-
5 viders with demonstrated experience in post-
6 traumatic stress disorder, trauma, secondary
7 trauma, compassion fatigue, and vicarious trau-
8 ma during compensated on-duty time;

9 (B) peer support programs;

10 (C) critical incident stress debriefing; and

11 (D) training on resiliency and burnout pre-
12 vention, conducted not less frequently than an-
13 nually.

14 (2) AVAILABILITY.—Services under paragraph
15 (1)—

16 (A) shall be available both during and out-
17 side scheduled duty hours, and such availability
18 shall be considered compensable on-duty time;
19 and

20 (B) may be furnished through providers of
21 the Department of Veterans Affairs or through
22 contracts with non-Department providers inde-
23 pendent of supervisory chains.

24 (3) IMPACT ON EMPLOYMENT.—The Secretary
25 shall ensure that the use of services under this sub-

1 section does not adversely affect the employment
2 status, performance evaluation, or career advance-
3 ment of covered personnel.

4 (b) OCCUPATIONAL SAFEGUARDS.—

5 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall establish
6 and implement policies applicable to covered per-
7 sonnel that provide for—

8 (A) reasonable limitations on workload and
9 shift duration;

10 (B) mandatory rest and recovery periods
11 following high-risk, traumatic, or otherwise psy-
12 chologically intensive interactions, as defined by
13 criteria established by the Secretary, including
14 appropriate supervisory review and approval
15 procedures governing the use of such rest peri-
16 ods and related support services so long as such
17 approvals are not conditioned on availability of
18 staff; and

19 (C) staffing levels informed by workforce
20 assessments, contact volume, response time
21 goals, employee workload, and other operational
22 metrics determined appropriate by the Sec-
23 retary.

24 (2) LIMITATION ON NUMBER OF CASES.—The
25 Secretary shall ensure that all covered personnel are

1 only required to handle one case at a given time, in-
2 cluding digital services cases, relating to outreach to
3 the Veterans Crisis Line for assistance.

4 (3) OVERTIME.—During periods in which con-
5 tact volume or response queues exceed established
6 operational thresholds, the Secretary shall provide
7 opportunities for voluntary overtime for covered per-
8 sonnel willing to assist in reducing such backlogs.

9 (4) OPERATIONAL SCHEDULING.—The Sec-
10 retary shall use operational scheduling practices that
11 promote workforce sustainability, employee well-
12 being, and quality of life, including by undertaking
13 reasonable efforts to ensure equitable distribution of
14 weekend, overnight, holiday, and other undesirable
15 shifts among covered personnel, while maintaining
16 continuity of operations and adequate staffing levels.

17 (5) WORKFORCE NEEDS.—The Secretary
18 shall—

19 (A) use software to predict call patterns
20 and assess workforce needs; and

21 (B) as appropriate, assign or hire addi-
22 tional personnel dedicated specifically to re-
23 sponding to cases involving complex needs or
24 disruptive behavior in order to ensure such
25 cases receive specialized and effective handling.

1 (c) ADMINISTRATION.—

2 (1) OPERATIONAL AUTHORITIES AND SAFE-
3 GUARDS.—The Secretary shall review and amend
4 current policies and procedures governing the re-
5 sponse to contacts received through the Veterans
6 Crisis Line, consistent with section 1720F(h) of title
7 38, United States Code.

8 (2) NON-CRISIS OR ABUSIVE CONTACTS.—

9 (A) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall es-
10 tablish procedures to identify patterns of non-
11 crisis or abusive communications that materi-
12 ally interfere with the mission of the Veterans
13 Crisis Line.

14 (B) ACTIONS.—Pursuant to procedures es-
15 tablished under subparagraph (A), the Sec-
16 retary may take appropriate actions relating to
17 non-crisis or abusive communications, includ-
18 ing—

19 (i) providing verbal or written notice
20 or warnings to the individual;

21 (ii) implementing reasonable call han-
22 dling restrictions in cases of repeated mis-
23 use;

24 (iii) directing the individual to alter-
25 native appropriate resources; and

1 (iv) reestablishing dedicated disruptive
2 caller intervention units, which shall in-
3 clude repeat caller intervention specialists
4 who have trauma-informed behavioral man-
5 agement training.

6 (C) SAFEGUARDS AND REVIEW.—The Sec-
7 retary shall ensure that any action taken under
8 this paragraph—

9 (i) includes safeguards to preserve ac-
10 cess to the Veterans Crisis Line for indi-
11 viduals experiencing a bona fide crisis; and

12 (ii) is subject to supervisory review
13 and periodic reassessment.

14 (d) REPORT.—

15 (1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than one year
16 after the date of the enactment of this Act, the
17 Comptroller General of the United States shall—

18 (A) conduct a review of the implementation
19 and effectiveness of this section; and

20 (B) submit to the Committee on Veterans'
21 Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on
22 Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representa-
23 tives a report containing the findings of such
24 review.

1 (2) ELEMENTS.—The review conducted under
2 paragraph (1) shall include an assessment of—

3 (A) the implementation of mental health
4 and wellness services for covered personnel
5 under subsection (a);

6 (B) the effectiveness and use of occupa-
7 tional safeguards established under subsection
8 (b);

9 (C) staffing levels, turnover, overtime
10 usage, and workforce retention among covered
11 personnel;

12 (D) whether scheduling practices for cov-
13 ered personnel appropriately support workforce
14 sustainability, employee well-being, and equi-
15 table distribution of weekend, overnight, holi-
16 day, and other undesirable shifts;

17 (E) the operational effectiveness of work-
18 force prediction tools, staffing assessments, and
19 specialized response staffing used pursuant to
20 subsection (b)(5);

21 (F) the extent to which covered personnel
22 are able to access confidential mental health
23 and wellness services without adverse employ-
24 ment consequences;

1 (G) the implementation and oversight of
2 policies relating to non-crisis or abusive con-
3 tacts under subsection (c)(2); and

4 (H) any recommendations to improve
5 workforce well-being, operational effectiveness,
6 and crisis response capabilities within the Vet-
7 erans Crisis Line.

8 (3) ACCESS TO INFORMATION.—The Secretary
9 shall provide the Comptroller General with access to
10 such information and personnel as the Comptroller
11 General determines necessary to carry out the review
12 required under paragraph (1), consistent with appli-
13 cable privacy and confidentiality protections.

14 (4) PROTECTION OF SENSITIVE INFORMA-
15 TION.—The report submitted under paragraph (1)
16 shall not include personally identifiable information
17 relating to covered personnel or individuals con-
18 tacting the Veterans Crisis Line.

19 (e) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

20 (1) COVERED PERSONNEL.—The term “covered
21 personnel” means any employee or contractor of the
22 Department of Veterans Affairs who responds to
23 contacts or participates in responding to contacts
24 through the Veterans Crisis Line.

1 (2) VETERANS CRISIS LINE.—The term “Vet-
2 erans Crisis Line” means the toll-free hotline for
3 veterans established under section 1720F(h) of title
4 38, United States Code, and the program operated
5 by the Department of Veterans Affairs to provide
6 crisis intervention and suicide prevention services
7 through such hotline.