119TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. _____

To amend title 38, United States Code, to establish certain administration and other requirements for the Veterans Crisis Line, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

Mr. MORAN (for himself and Mrs. MURRAY) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on _____

A BILL

To amend title 38, United States Code, to establish certain administration and other requirements for the Veterans Crisis Line, and for other purposes.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the ''Veterans Crisis Line Improvement Act of 2026''.

SEC. 2. ADMINISTRATION AND OTHER REQUIREMENTS FOR VETERANS CRISIS LINE.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Subchapter II of chapter 17 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by inserting after section 1720F the following new section:

"§ 1720F–1. Administration and other requirements for Veterans Crisis Line

''(a) EMERGENCY RESPONSE COORDINATION AND SOCIAL SERVICE ASSISTANT STAFFING.—

''(1) ALTERNATIVE EMERGENCY RESPONSE RESOURCES.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of the Veterans Crisis Line Improvement Act of 2026, the Secretary shall ensure that the Veterans Crisis Line maintains and keeps current a centralized resource for social service assistants containing alternative emergency crisis-response resources that may be used when a State or local law enforcement agency or emergency medical service declines, fails to answer, or is otherwise unable to fulfill a request by the Veterans Crisis Line for an emergency crisis intervention.

''(2) PRIORITY JURISDICTIONS.—In carrying out paragraph (1), the Secretary shall prioritize jurisdictions in which requests by the Veterans Crisis Line for emergency crisis intervention have repeatedly gone unanswered or been declined.

''(3) CONTENTS.—To the extent available and appropriate, the resource required under paragraph (1) shall include mobile crisis response teams, State and local behavioral health crisis services, 988-related mobile crisis resources, relevant Department police points of contact, and other appropriate emergency response resources, including information on geographic coverage, hours of operation, dispatch criteria, and direct contact information.

''(4) STAFFING METHODOLOGY.—

''(A) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall maintain staffing levels for social service assistants for the Veterans Crisis Line in a manner that is informed by workload data, including the volume and complexity of emergency dispatch and facility transport plan requests by time of day and day of week, and shall account for weekend and overnight workload.

''(B) NO RELIANCE ON FIXED RATIO.—The Veterans Crisis Line may not rely solely on a fixed ratio of crisis responders to social service assistants to determine staffing levels under subparagraph (A).

''(5) REVIEW.—Not less frequently than annually, the Secretary shall review the effectiveness of

the resource and staffing methodology required by this subsection and make adjustments as necessary to improve the timeliness of emergency crisis interventions.

''(b) EVALUATION OF POST-CONTACT REFERRALS AND OUTREACH.—

''(1) OUTCOME DATA.—The Secretary shall systematically collect and track, with respect to referrals by the Veterans Crisis Line to suicide prevention coordinators, information sufficient to determine—

''(A) whether the referred veteran was successfully reached;

''(B) the elapsed time between the referral and successful contact;

''(C) whether the veteran accepted or declined additional assistance;

''(D) whether care was scheduled, and if scheduled—

''(i) the type of care scheduled;

''(ii) whether such care was scheduled for direct care from the Department or through care in the community; and

''(iii) the service provided.

''(2) EVALUATION OF OUTREACH METHODS.—Using the data collected under paragraph (1), the Secretary shall—

''(A) evaluate whether different outreach timeframes or communication methods, including text-based communication, improve successful contact and engagement in care; and

''(B) in response to such evaluation, modify procedures as the Secretary considers appropriate.

''(c) CONTINUITY OF CARE.—

''(1) CONTINUITY OF CARE DURING BUSINESS HOURS.—The Secretary shall establish a process under which, when appropriate and with the consent of the veteran, a Veterans Crisis Line responder may facilitate a same-day referral to a local suicide prevention coordinator or other appropriate suicide prevention professional of the Veterans Health Administration to facilitate same-day outreach to the veteran during normal business hours.

''(2) CONTINUITY OF CARE AFTER HOURS.—The Secretary shall establish a process to facilitate same-day contact by an appropriate professional of the Veterans Health Administration for veterans referred by the Veterans Crisis Line outside normal

business hours, including through existing 24-hour clinical capabilities as appropriate.

''(d) AFTER-HOURS ESCALATION OF SUSPECTED ABUSE, NEGLECT, OR EXPLOITATION.—

''(1) PROCESS REQUIRED.—The Secretary shall establish and maintain a process available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, under which a Veterans Crisis Line responder may timely escalate information concerning suspected non-imminent abuse, neglect, or exploitation of a child or vulnerable adult to an appropriate employee of the Department who is authorized to assess the information and, when required, make a report to the appropriate authority.

''(2) USE OF EXISTING CAPABILITIES.—In carrying out paragraph (1), the Secretary shall, to the extent practicable, use existing 24-hour clinical capabilities of the Veterans Health Administration and shall establish clear procedures for transfer, documentation, and responsibility for follow-up.

''(3) RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.—Nothing in this subsection shall be construed to designate a Veterans Crisis Line responder as a mandated reporter, alter any reporting duty imposed by State law, or require the disclosure of information prohibited by Federal law.

"(e) INSTITUTIONAL DISCLOSURES OF VETERANS CRISIS LINE CRITICAL INCIDENTS.—

"(1) PROCEDURE REQUIRED.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of the Veterans Crisis Line Improvement Act of 2026, the Secretary shall establish a written procedure applicable to the Veterans Crisis Line for determining whether a critical incident warrants disclosure to a caller or a representative of the caller.

"(2) ELEMENTS.—The procedure required by paragraph (1) shall—

"(A) identify the categories of incidents that require an institutional disclosure determination;

"(B) identify the official or officials responsible for making the determination;

"(C) establish a timely process for communicating an institutional disclosure when warranted;

"(D) provide, as appropriate, an explanation of the incident and information regarding available rights or recourse; and

"(E) provide for documentation of the determination and any institutional disclosure made.

''(3) PRIVACY AND QUALITY-MANAGEMENT PROTECTIONS.—Nothing in this subsection shall be construed to require disclosure of information prohibited from disclosure under Federal law or to waive any privilege or confidentiality protection applicable to quality-management or patient-safety information.

''(f) CONGRESSIONAL OVERSIGHT.—Not less frequently than annually, the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report containing the following:

''(1) An identification of the local jurisdictions in which requests by the Veterans Crisis Line for emergency crisis intervention have repeatedly gone unanswered or been declined, for which priority is to be provided under subsection (a)(2).

''(2) A summary of the data collected under subsection (b)(1) and any modifications made to procedures pursuant to subsection (b)(2)(B).

''(3) A summary of the critical incidents for which institutional disclosure determinations were made and the number of institutional disclosures completed under subsection (e).

''(g) VETERANS CRISIS LINE DEFINED.—In this section, the term 'Veterans Crisis Line' means the toll-free

hotline provided under section 1720F(h) of this title, or any successor hotline.''.

(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of such chapter is amended by inserting after the item relating to section 1720F the following new item:

''1720F–1. Administration and other requirements for Veterans Crisis Line.''.