

1 AN ACT relating to veterans.

2 ***Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Kentucky:***

3 ➔Section 1. KRS 154.12-330 is amended to read as follows:

- 4 (1) The Kentucky Economic Development Finance Authority is hereby authorized to
5 develop and fund a small business loan program to assist new or existing small
6 businesses operating in the Commonwealth. The authority may lend up to one
7 hundred thousand dollars (\$100,000) to any eligible small business for acquisition,
8 construction, expansion, working capital, or any other business expense the
9 authority deems reasonable to approve.
- 10 (2) The authority shall determine the terms, conditions, and requirements for loans
11 issued under this section, including collateral requirements when deemed
12 reasonable and appropriate. Recognizing that small businesses, while essential for
13 the economic vitality of the Commonwealth, may have difficulty obtaining
14 conventional loans, the authority may provide terms that are more lenient, high-risk,
15 less secure, or otherwise less stringent than industry standards.
- 16 (3) To be eligible for a loan under this section, a small business shall be engaged in
17 manufacturing, agribusiness, or service or technology, shall not be engaged
18 primarily in retail, and shall commit to creating and maintaining at least one (1) new
19 full-time job above the number existing on the date of application.
- 20 **(4) The authority shall develop criteria to evaluate loan applications that give**
21 **investment preference to businesses that:**
- 22 **(a) Employ veterans at a rate of no less than twenty-five percent (25%) of the**
23 **business's total number of employees; or**
- 24 **(b) Are veteran-owned businesses, as defined in KRS 14A.1-070.**
- 25 **The authority shall use these criteria to make all reasonable efforts to direct at**
26 **least seven percent (7%) of loaned funds each year to these businesses, provided**
27 **that the authority receives qualified applications from these businesses that**

1 request at least seven percent (7%) of the total funds budgeted to be loaned each
2 year.

3 ➔SECTION 2. A NEW SECTION OF KRS CHAPTER 151B IS CREATED TO
4 READ AS FOLLOWS:

5 (1) The Office of the Kentucky Center for Statistics shall produce a monthly
6 electronic report that shall:

7 (a) Include workforce need projections which are organized by industry, major
8 occupational group, geographic region, and necessary credentials or
9 training;

10 (b) Compare those workforce need projections with existing and projected
11 workforce availability as well as the availability of necessary credentials in
12 the Commonwealth;

13 (c) Highlight in-demand industries, occupational groups, and credentials by
14 geographic region; and

15 (d) Include a list of which in-demand jobs and credentials would leverage the
16 skills, experience, and credentials possessed by veterans.

17 (2) The office shall, at least once per month, forward this report, underlying data,
18 and any additional relevant information to:

19 (a) The Kentucky Commission on Military Affairs;

20 (b) Military out-placement offices;

21 (c) Vocational education centers; and

22 (d) Nonprofit programs which connect veterans to jobs.

23 ➔SECTION 3. A NEW SECTION OF SUBCHAPTER 12 OF KRS CHAPTER
24 154 IS CREATED TO READ AS FOLLOWS:

25 (1) The Kentucky Commission on Military Affairs shall annually review
26 apprenticeship, training, and other in-state vocational programs focused on
27 providing job training and placement to returning veterans. This annual review

- 1 shall compare the costs and outcomes of the reviewed programs.
- 2 (2) The commission shall use the results of the annual review to develop a series of
3 recommendations on how to utilize state funding to expand those programs
4 which receive the most favorable evaluations. The commission shall include an
5 estimation of the future returns and improved outcomes from proposed program
6 expansions to the Commonwealth.
- 7 (3) The commission shall provide an annual report describing its recommendations
8 from subsection (2) of this section to the Legislative Research Commission, the
9 Interim Joint Committee on Veterans, Military Affairs, and Public Protection, the
10 Interim Joint Committee on Licensing, Occupations, and Administrative
11 Regulations, the Interim Joint Committee on Economic Development and
12 Workforce Investment, and the Office of the Governor to assist those entities in
13 making annual budget decisions prior to November 1 of each year for five (5)
14 years after the effective date of this Act.

15 ➔SECTION 4. A NEW SECTION OF SUBCHAPTER 12 OF KRS CHAPTER
16 154 IS CREATED TO READ AS FOLLOWS:

- 17 (1) The Kentucky Commission on Military Affairs is directed to review all state
18 occupational licenses for which military members may have relevant training or
19 experience and to produce a report recommending steps that can be taken to
20 increase the recognition of military training and experience towards in-state
21 licensing within one (1) year from the effective date of this Act.
- 22 (2) The commission shall thereafter:
- 23 (a) Take any steps identified in the report that can be taken without further
24 legislation as soon as practicable and not later than one (1) year after
25 issuance of the report; and
- 26 (b) Report to the Legislative Research Commission, the Interim Joint
27 Committee on Licensing, Occupations, and Administrative Regulations, and

1 *the Interim Joint Committee on Veterans, Military Affairs, and Public*
2 *Protection annually to request that those entities consider any necessary*
3 *legislation.*

4 ➔SECTION 5. A NEW SECTION OF KRS CHAPTER 311 IS CREATED TO
5 READ AS FOLLOWS:

6 *(1) The Kentucky Board of Medical Licensure shall review all licensing practices*
7 *and take all necessary and appropriate steps to increase recognition of military*
8 *training and experience toward in-state licensing of nurses and physician*
9 *assistants through the promulgation of administrative regulations.*

10 *(2) The board shall report to the Legislative Research Commission, the Interim Joint*
11 *Committee on Veterans, Military Affairs, and Public Protection, and the Interim*
12 *Joint Committee on Licensing, Occupations, and Administrative Regulations*
13 *within one (1) year of the effective date of this Act any additional steps that would*
14 *require legislation and request that those entities consider any necessary*
15 *legislation.*

16 ➔SECTION 6. A NEW SECTION OF KRS CHAPTER 164 IS CREATED TO
17 READ AS FOLLOWS:

18 *(1) Any veteran who enrolls as a student in good standing at a public postsecondary*
19 *education institution shall, upon application for academic credit, be granted*
20 *academic credit towards his or her degree for the completion of courses that were*
21 *part of that veteran's military training or service if the completed courses meet*
22 *the standards of all appropriate discipline-specific accrediting bodies and*
23 *institutional accrediting agencies as recognized by the United States Department*
24 *of Education.*

25 *(2) No fee, tuition, or other charge shall be assessed against a veteran for academic*
26 *credit granted pursuant to this section.*

27 *(3) The governing boards of all public postsecondary education institutions shall*

1 adopt procedures necessary to fully implement the provisions of this section.

2 ➔SECTION 7. A NEW SECTION OF KRS CHAPTER 164 IS CREATED TO
3 READ AS FOLLOWS:

4 The governing boards of all public institutions shall adopt rules and procedures to:

- 5 (1) Include veterans and National Guard members in any early course registration
6 period, if the institution offers an early course registration period to any segment
7 of the student population;
- 8 (2) Award full academic credit to a student who is called to active duty in the United
9 States military for a course if at the time the student is called to active duty:
- 10 (a) The student has completed at least eighty-five (85%) of the coursework
11 contributing to the final grade in the course, including but not limited to
12 exams and classroom attendance, if applicable; and
- 13 (b) Has a passing grade;
- 14 (3) Refund a portion of tuition and fees to a student who is called to active duty and
15 does not meet the requirements of subsection (2) of this section for academic
16 credit to be awarded, that portion being determined by taking the total amount of
17 tuition and fees paid by the student for the current academic term and
18 multiplying that total amount by the percentage of academic credits for which the
19 student is enrolled in the current term for which the student is not eligible to
20 receive academic credit under subsection (2) of this section;
- 21 (4) Permit all veterans and any National Guard member who is returning from
22 active duty to do the following without incurring late fees or other penalties:
- 23 (a) File an application for admission at any time prior to the first day of classes
24 of the semester for which the applicant is seeking admission;
- 25 (b) Once an application has been filled but before the institution has issued a
26 determination on admission, register for available courses and permit the
27 applicant to attend courses provisionally; and

1 (c) If an applicant is not registered for classes upon admission to the
2 institution, register for available courses prior to the registration deadline.

3 ➔Section 8. KRS 40.317 is amended to read as follows:

4 (1) The Kentucky Department of Veterans' Affairs shall employ ~~no more than five (5)~~
5 ~~}veterans' benefits regional administrators and {no fewer than twenty (20)}~~veterans'
6 benefits field representatives.

7 (a)~~(1)~~ The duties of a veterans' benefits regional administrator shall include but
8 not be limited to supervision of veterans' benefits field representatives in an
9 assigned region.

10 (b)~~(2)~~ The duties of a veterans' benefits field representative shall include but
11 not be limited to providing assistance to veterans and their dependents with
12 initiation, preparation, documentation, and adjudication of claims to benefits
13 under federal, state, or local laws.

14 (2) The department shall, whenever feasible, select and train veterans' benefits field
15 representatives and veterans' benefits regional administrators who have direct
16 knowledge of the veteran communities they serve.

17 (3) Veterans' benefits field representatives shall help identify all federal and other
18 health benefits, coverage, and services available to veterans and their families.

19 (4) Veterans' benefits field representatives shall coordinate with relevant
20 departments, health care providers, and health insurance programs to help
21 veterans and their beneficiaries apply for coverage under such programs,
22 including helping veterans overcome barriers within the health care system to
23 ensure enrollment in health plans and effective delivery and coordination of
24 health services.

25 (5) Initiatives by veterans' benefits field representatives shall, whenever feasible,
26 leverage existing resources and structures where veterans and their families are
27 likely to be found.

1 ➔SECTION 9. A NEW SECTION OF KRS CHAPTER 40 IS CREATED TO
2 READ AS FOLLOWS:

3 *(1) The Kentucky Department of Veterans' Affairs shall examine all existing*
4 *programs designed to increase access to affordable quality health care by using*
5 *the veterans' benefits field representatives described in Section 8 of this Act as a*
6 *source of information about the unique needs and coverage and treatment gaps*
7 *faced by veterans and their families in order to evaluate if the needs of veterans*
8 *and their families are met by those programs or whether further coordination*
9 *with the veterans' benefits field representatives or other programs or initiatives*
10 *would better meet those needs.*

11 *(2) The department shall, upon completing any steps identified in subsection (1) of*
12 *this section, produce a report of its findings, recommendations, and any*
13 *additional legislative or budgetary action it recommends and deliver the report to*
14 *the Legislative Research Commission, the Interim Joint Committee on Veterans,*
15 *Military Affairs, and Public Protection, the Interim Joint Committee on Health,*
16 *Welfare, and Family Services, and the Office of the Governor; and shall make*
17 *the report freely available to the public.*

18 *(3) The department shall prepare a report showing the impacts that Medicaid*
19 *expansion under 42 U.S.C. § 1396a and other relevant federal law has had to*
20 *date for veterans and their families in Kentucky, shall include any*
21 *recommendations for better including or serving veterans and their families in*
22 *that expansion; shall deliver that report to the Legislative Research Commission,*
23 *the Interim Joint Committee on Veterans, Military Affairs, and Public Protection,*
24 *the Interim Joint Committee on Health, Welfare, and Family Services, and the*
25 *Office of the Governor, and shall make the report freely available to the public.*

26 ➔SECTION 10. A NEW SECTION OF KRS CHAPTER 40 IS CREATED TO
27 READ AS FOLLOWS:

1 (1) The Kentucky Department of Veterans' Affairs shall ensure that veterans and
2 their families have access to mental health treatment, including for post-
3 traumatic stress disorder, depression, suicide, and suicidal ideation.

4 (a) The department shall make mental health coverage services and treatment a
5 full focus stream of the veterans' benefits field representative program
6 described in Section 8 of this Act, and ensure that veterans' benefit field
7 representatives help identify all federal and other mental health benefits,
8 coverage, and services available to veterans and their families, including for
9 post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, and suicide prevention.

10 (b) The department shall develop and implement a strategy to reduce barriers to
11 access to mental health services and treatment for veterans and their
12 families in coordination with local, state, and federal governmental
13 agencies and in consultation with nonprofits, service providers including
14 Veterans Affairs medical centers and the United States Department of
15 Veterans Affairs, and localities and cities that have effective prevention and
16 treatment systems for mental health, including by:

17 1. Identifying structural and logistical barriers to accessing treatment,
18 including perceived stigma, long travel distances to receive care, and
19 any other barriers, and making an annual report on such barriers
20 available to the Legislative Research Commission, the Interim Joint
21 Committee on Veterans, Military Affairs, and Public Protection, the
22 Interim Joint Committee on Health, Welfare, and Family Services, the
23 Office of the Governor, and online;

24 2. Resolving all barriers identified in the report in subparagraph 1. of
25 this paragraph that can be resolved without legislative or budgetary
26 action, including through increased coordination between
27 departments, nonprofit providers, and the federal government,

1 application for and use of private and federal grants, and other
2 actions; and

3 3. Reporting annually to the Legislative Research Commission, the
4 Interim Joint Committee on Veterans, Military Affairs, and Public
5 Protection, the Interim Joint Committee on Health, Welfare, and
6 Family Services, and the Office of the Governor, and releasing to the
7 news media any additional legislative or budgetary steps that would
8 resolve barriers identified in subparagraph 1. of this paragraph that
9 have not been resolved by the steps taken under subparagraph 2. of
10 this paragraph.

11 (c) The department shall enhance and strengthen suicide prevention programs
12 that are based on best practices identified by experts in the field of mental
13 health care in coordination with local, state, and federal government
14 agencies, and in consultation with nonprofits, service providers including
15 the Veterans Affairs medical centers and the United States Department of
16 Veterans Affairs, and localities and cities that have effective prevention and
17 treatment systems for mental health, including by:

18 1. Identifying and applying for federal and private grants focused on
19 veteran suicide prevention;

20 2. Coordinating local, state, federal, and nonprofit programs that include
21 community-based approaches for at-risk veterans and veterans at
22 large;

23 3. Providing technical assistance to communities to develop strategic
24 plans to reduce veteran suicide, including through coordination and
25 participation by local leaders, faith communities, schools, workplaces,
26 and other stakeholders; and

27 4. Evaluating community strategic plans within Kentucky and

1 disseminating learnings and best practices to optimize the impact of
2 efforts by all partners and stakeholders.

3 (2) The department shall ensure that resources are available to veterans to assist in
4 connecting veterans to trained mental health care providers, including those
5 trained in veteran suicide prevention.

6 (a) The department shall create a centralized provider database, organized by
7 region, identifying mental health providers with expertise and ability to
8 assist veterans and their families which also identifies which mental health
9 providers have training or expertise in the prevention of veteran suicide and
10 treatment of veteran suicidal ideation.

11 (b) The department shall use existing resources and incorporate best practice
12 and research from the United States Department of Veterans Affairs and
13 state and nonprofit service providers in Kentucky to develop a continuing
14 education course for mental health providers in Kentucky to obtain
15 expertise in veteran suicide assessment, prevention, treatment, and risk
16 management.

17 (c) The department shall make the veteran suicide continuing education course
18 described in paragraph (b) of this subsection available for free to providers
19 in regions of the Commonwealth identified in paragraph (a) of this
20 subsection which lack a sufficient number of trained providers.

21 (d) The department shall use existing or appropriated resources to identify
22 evidence-based best practices to increase awareness of any veteran suicide
23 prevention hotline which provides services in-state and other crisis
24 resources with proven effectiveness to reduce veteran suicide.

25 ➔SECTION 11. A NEW SECTION OF KRS CHAPTER 40 IS CREATED TO
26 READ AS FOLLOWS:

27 The Kentucky Department of Veterans' Affairs shall create an initiative designed to

1 end veteran homelessness.

2 (1) "Ending veteran homelessness" has the same meaning as in the United States
3 Interagency Council on Homelessness Criteria and Benchmarks for Achieving
4 the Goal of Ending Veteran Homelessness.

5 (2) The department shall develop and implement a strategy to meet the goal of
6 ending veteran homelessness within three (3) years of the effective date of this
7 Act in coordination with local, state, and federal government agencies and
8 nonprofits, and in consultation with states and cities that have achieved an end to
9 veteran homelessness in accordance with the criteria described in subsection (1)
10 of this section, including through:

11 (a) Coordinated community outreach and a common assessment tool;

12 (b) A community-wide, comprehensive list of veterans experiencing
13 homelessness, prioritized based on vulnerability;

14 (c) Data-sharing among all relevant providers, government agencies, and
15 Veterans Affairs Medical Centers;

16 (d) Increased coordination and streamlined processes for appropriate housing
17 placements;

18 (e) Connecting veterans experiencing homelessness to health, mental health,
19 employment, and training resources through the services described in this
20 section;

21 (f) A commitment to Housing First principles, as defined by the United States
22 Interagency Council on Homelessness; and

23 (g) Identification of and application for funding as needed from privation,
24 foundation, and other partners.