

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 which gives**
21 **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 a veteran-owned businesses, as defined in KRS 14A.1-070.**

25 **The authority shall use these criteria to direct at least seven percent (7%) of**
26 **loaned funds each year to these businesses, provided that the authority receives**
27 **qualified applications from these businesses that request at least seven percent**

1 **(7%) of the total funds to be loaned each year.**

2 ➔ Section 2. KRS 154.12-213 is amended to read as follows:

3 **(1)** The cabinet, as it deems necessary and advisable, may:

4 **(a)**~~[(1)]~~ Consult with agencies of the state, federal, and local government in
5 order to coordinate development programs and plans and to articulate
6 agriculture, industry, and commerce in the light of the needs of particular
7 localities;

8 **(b)**~~[(2)]~~ Make studies of land utilization so as to determine areas suitable for
9 industrial and commercial development;

10 **(c)**~~[(3)]~~ Make studies and projections and publish information relating to the
11 economic development of the Commonwealth and make appropriate
12 recommendations to the board and the General Assembly;

13 **(d)**~~[(4)]~~ Establish and maintain development offices in out-of-state centers of
14 industrial and commercial management; **or**

15 **(e)**~~[(5)]~~ Place advertising in appropriate media promoting Kentucky's resources
16 and locational advantages for industrial and commercial enterprises.

17 **(2) (a) The cabinet shall produce a monthly electronic report which shall:**

18 **1. Include workforce need projections organized by industry, job type,**
19 **geography, and needed credential;**

20 **2. Compare workforce needs with existing and projected workforce and**
21 **credential availability in the Commonwealth;**

22 **3. Highlight top in-demand industries, job types, and credentials by**
23 **geographic areas; and**

24 **4. Include a mapping of which in-demand job titles and credentials**
25 **would leverage skills, experience, and credentials possessed by**
26 **veterans.**

27 **(b) The cabinet shall forward the report, underlying data, and any additional**

1 relevant information monthly to the Kentucky Commission on Military
2 Affairs and appropriate military out-placement offices, education centers,
3 and nonprofit programs working to connect veterans with jobs in the
4 Commonwealth.

5 ➔SECTION 3. A NEW SECTION OF SUBCHAPTER 12 OF KRS CHAPTER
6 154 IS CREATED TO READ AS FOLLOWS:

7 (1) The Kentucky Commission on Military Affairs shall annually review
8 apprenticeship, training, and other in-state vocational programs focused on
9 providing job training and placement to returning veterans. This annual review
10 shall evaluate the costs and results of the reviewed programs and recommend
11 programs for expansion with state funding, including to estimate future returns
12 to the state of improved outcomes from program expansion.

13 (2) The commission shall provide an annual report to the Legislative Research
14 Commission, the Interim Joint Committee on Veterans, Military Affairs, and
15 Public Protection, the Interim Joint Committee on Licensing, Occupations, and
16 Administrative Regulations and the Office of the Governor to be used to inform
17 annual budget decisions on November 1 of each year for five (5) years after the
18 effective date of this Act.

19 ➔SECTION 4. A NEW SECTION OF SUBCHAPTER 12 OF KRS CHAPTER
20 154 IS CREATED TO READ AS FOLLOWS:

21 (1) The Kentucky Commission on Military Affairs is directed to review all state
22 occupational licenses for which military members may have relevant training or
23 experience and produce a report recommending steps that can be taken to
24 increase the recognition of military training and experience towards in-state
25 licensing within one (1) year from the effective date of this Act.

26 (2) The commission shall thereafter:

27 (a) Take any steps identified in the report that can be taken without further

1 legislation as soon as practicable and not later than one (1) year after
2 issuance of the report; and

3 (b) Report to the Legislative Research Commission, the Interim Joint
4 Committee on Licensing, Occupations, and Administrative Regulations, and
5 the Interim Joint Committee on Veterans, Military Affairs, and Public
6 Protection annually to request that those entities consider any necessary
7 legislation.

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

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

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

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

22 (1) Any veteran who enrolls as a student in good standing at a public institution shall
23 upon application for academic credit be granted academic credits towards his or
24 her degree for the completion of courses that were part of that veteran's military
25 training or service if the completed courses meet the standards of the American
26 Council on Education or its equivalent for the awarding of academic credits.

27 (2) No fee, tuition, or other charge shall be assessed against a veteran for academic

1 credits granted pursuant to this section.

2 (3) The governing boards of all public institutions shall adopt procedures necessary
3 to fully implement the provisions of this section.

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

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

7 (1) Include veterans and National Guard members in any early course registration
8 period, if the institution offers an early course registration period to any segment
9 of the student population;

10 (2) Award full academic credit to students who are called to active duty in the United
11 States military for each class in which the student is enrolled at the time he or she
12 is called to active duty, provided that at the time the student is called to active
13 duty;

14 (a) The student had attended thirteen (13) or more weeks of instruction or had
15 completed eighty-five percent (85%) of the course's work; and

16 (b) Had a passing grade;

17 (3) Refund a portion of tuition and fees to a student who is called to active duty and
18 does not meet the requirements of subsection (2) of this section for academic
19 credit to be awarded, that portion being determined by taking the total amount of
20 tuition and fees paid by the student for the current academic term and
21 multiplying that total amount by the percentage of academic credits for which the
22 student is enrolled in the current term for which the student is not eligible to
23 receive academic credit under subsection (2) of this section;

24 (4) Permit veterans with no previous college experience to file their applications for
25 admission up to the end of course registration, and to begin classes pending
26 completion of their application and provision of supporting documents; and

27 (5) Permit veterans who are returning from active duty to register without incurring

1 **late fees or other penalties even after the normal course registration period ends.**

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

3 **(1)** The Kentucky Department of Veterans' Affairs shall employ ~~[no more than five (5)]~~
4 ~~]~~veterans' **health navigator**~~[benefits]~~ regional administrators and ~~[no fewer than~~
5 ~~twenty (20)]~~veterans' **health navigators**~~[benefits field representatives]~~.

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

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

13 **(2) The department shall select and train veterans' health navigators and veterans'**
14 **health navigator regional administrators who have direct knowledge of the**
15 **veteran communities they serve.**

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

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

23 **(5) Initiatives by veterans' health navigators should leverage existing resources and**
24 **structures where veterans and their families are likely to be found.**

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

27 **(1) The Kentucky Department of Veterans' Affairs shall examine all existing**

1 programs designed to increase access to affordable quality health care by using
2 the veterans' health navigators described in Section 8 of this Act as a source of
3 information about the unique needs and coverage and treatment gaps faced by
4 veterans and their families to evaluate whether the needs of veterans and their
5 families are met by those programs or whether further coordination with the
6 veterans' health navigators or other steps would better meet those needs.

7 (2) The department shall execute any steps identified in subsection (1) of this section
8 and produce a report of its findings, recommendations, and any additional
9 legislative or budgetary action it recommends; and shall deliver that report to the
10 Legislative Research Commission, the Interim Joint Committee on Veterans,
11 Military Affairs, and Public Protection, the Interim Joint Committee on Health,
12 Welfare, and Family Services, and the Office of the Governor and release it to the
13 news media.

14 (3) The department shall prepare a report showing the impacts that Medicaid
15 expansion has had to date for veterans and their families in Kentucky, shall
16 include any recommendations for better including or serving veterans and their
17 families in that expansion, and shall deliver that report to the Legislative
18 Research Commission, the Interim Joint Committee on Veterans, Military
19 Affairs, and Public Protection, the Interim Joint Committee on Health, Welfare,
20 and Family Services, and the Office of the Governor and release it to the news
21 media.

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

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

27 (a) The department shall make mental health coverage services and treatment a

1 full focus stream of the veteran health navigator program described in
2 Section 8 of this Act, and ensure that veterans' health navigators help
3 identify all federal and other mental health benefits, coverage, and services
4 available to veterans and their families, including for post-traumatic stress
5 disorder, depression, and suicide prevention.

6 (b) The department shall develop and implement a strategy to reduce barriers to
7 access to mental health services and treatment for veterans and their
8 families in coordination with local, state, and federal government agencies
9 and in consultation with nonprofits, service providers including Veterans
10 Affairs Medical Centers and the United States Department of Veterans
11 Affairs, and localities and cities that have effective prevention and treatment
12 systems for mental health, including by:

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

20 2. Resolving all barriers identified in the report in subparagraph 1. of
21 this paragraph that can be resolved without legislative or budgetary
22 action, including through increased coordination between
23 departments, non-profit providers, and the federal government,
24 application for and use of private and federal grants, and other
25 actions; and

26 3. Reporting annually to the Legislative Research Commission, the
27 Interim Joint Committee on Veterans, Military Affairs, and Public

1 Protection, the Interim Joint Committee on Health, Welfare, and
2 Family Services, the Office of the Governor and releasing to the news
3 media any additional legislative or budgetary steps that would resolve
4 barriers identified in subparagraph 1. of this paragraph that have not
5 been resolved by the steps taken under subparagraph 2. of this
6 paragraph.

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

- 14 1. Identifying and applying for federal and private grants focused on
15 veteran suicide prevention;
- 16 2. Coordinating local, state, federal, and nonprofit programs that include
17 community-based approaches for at-risk veterans and veterans at
18 large;
- 19 3. Providing technical assistance to communities to develop strategic
20 plans to reduce veteran suicide, including through coordination and
21 participation by local leaders, faith communities, schools, workplaces,
22 and other stakeholders; and
- 23 4. Evaluating community strategic plans within Kentucky and
24 disseminating learnings and best practices to optimize the impact of
25 efforts by all partners and stakeholders.

26 (2) The department shall ensure that resources are available to veterans to assist in
27 connecting veterans to trained mental health care providers, including those

1 trained in veteran suicide prevention.

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

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

13 (c) The department shall make the veteran suicide continuing education course
14 described in paragraph (b) of this subsection available for free to providers
15 in regions of the state identified in paragraph (a) of this subsection which
16 lack a sufficient number of trained providers.

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

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

23 The Kentucky Department of Veterans' Affairs shall create an initiative designed to
24 end veteran homelessness.

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

- 1 (2) The department shall develop and implement a strategy to meet that goal within
2 three (3) years of the effective date of this Act in coordination with local, state,
3 and federal government agencies and nonprofits, and in consultation with states
4 and cities that have achieved an end to veteran homelessness in accordance with
5 the criteria described in subsection (1) of this section, including through:
6 (a) Coordinated community outreach and a common assessment tool;
7 (b) A community-wide, comprehensive list of veterans experiencing
8 homelessness, prioritized based on vulnerability;
9 (c) Data-sharing among all relevant providers, government agencies, and
10 Veterans Affairs Medical Centers;
11 (d) Increased coordination and streamlined processes for appropriate housing
12 placements;
13 (e) Connecting veterans experiencing homelessness to health, mental health,
14 employment, and training resources through the services described in this
15 section;
16 (f) A commitment to Housing First principles, as defined by the United States
17 Interagency Council on Homelessness; and
18 (g) Identification of and application for funding as needed from privation,
19 foundation, and other partners.