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II

119TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 1655

To expand congressional oversight of the operation of the Veterans Crisis Line of the Department of Veterans Affairs, to improve workforce protections for all Veterans Crisis Line personnel, and to ensure robust performance standards that fulfill the Veterans Crisis Line mission and meet caller demand, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

MAY 7, 2025

Ms. DUCKWORTH introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs

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A BILL

To expand congressional oversight of the operation of the Veterans Crisis Line of the Department of Veterans Affairs, to improve workforce protections for all Veterans Crisis Line personnel, and to ensure robust performance standards that fulfill the Veterans Crisis Line mission and meet caller demand, 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 ''Protecting Veterans in Crisis Act''.

SEC. 2. OVERSIGHT OF VETERANS CRISIS LINE.

(a) NOTIFICATION OF PENDING TERMINATION OF VETERANS CRISIS LINE EMPLOYEES.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 48 hours before terminating the employment of any employee of the Veterans Crisis Line, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a notification that provides—

(A) a justification of cause for such termination;

(B) a clarification on whether the employee is a veteran or military spouse; and

(C) a detailed plan to ensure continuity of the mission readiness of the Veterans Crisis Line in the event of such termination.

(2) SUNSET.—This subsection shall terminate on January 20, 2029.

(b) REPORT ON VETERANS CRISIS LINE PERSONNEL.—Not later than 30 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs and the Committee on Appropriations of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs and the Committee on Appropriations of the

House of Representatives a report that includes the following:

(1) The number of employees working for the Veterans Crisis Line on January 20, 2025, which shall include a breakdown by job category, probationary status, whether the employee is a veteran, whether the employee is a military spouse, status of employment on the date of submission of the report, and date of reinstatement.

(2) The number of employees terminated from the Veterans Crisis Line on or around February 13, 2025, which shall include a breakdown by job category, probationary status, whether the employee is a veteran, whether the employee is a military spouse, status of employment on the date of submission of the report, and date of reinstatement.

(3) The number of employees terminated from the Veterans Crisis Line on or around February 24, 2025, which shall include a breakdown by job category, probationary status, whether the employee is a veteran, whether the employee is a military spouse, status of employment on the date of submission of the report, and date of reinstatement.

(4) The number of employees working for the Veterans Crisis Line on the date of submission of

the report, which shall include a breakdown by job category, probationary status, whether the employee is a veteran, and whether the employee is a military spouse.

(c) REPORT ON VETERANS CRISIS LINE OPERATIONS AND PERFORMANCE.—Not later than 30 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, and every 30 days thereafter until January 20, 2029, 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 that includes the following:

(1) An assessment of the performance of the Veterans Crisis Line, as compared to the previous month and the same month of the previous calendar year.

(2) Average wait times for a caller to connect with an operator and the volume of unanswered calls.

(3) Ratios of callers to phone operators, both in-person and remote, trainers, and all other positions affiliated with the Veterans Crisis Line.

(4) A report on resources used and outstanding.

(5) A staffing report broken down by job category.

(d) COMPTROLLER GENERAL REPORT ON IMPROVEMENTS TO VETERANS CRISIS LINE.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Comptroller General of the United States shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs and the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs and the Committee on Energy and Commerce of the House of Representatives a report on the operation and performance of the Veterans Crisis Line, including recommendations for improvement.

(e) VETERANS CRISIS LINE DEFINED.—In this section, the term ''Veterans Crisis Line'' means the toll-free hotline for veterans established under section 1720F(h) of title 38, United States Code.

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