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As of: November 7, 2016 (1:11pm)

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**** Bill No. ****

Introduced By *****

By Request of the State Administration and Veterans' Affairs

Interim Committee

A Bill for an Act entitled: "An Act revising the state suicide prevention program; providing an appropriation; amending section 53-21-1101, MCA; and providing an effective date."

WHEREAS, the State Administration and Veterans' Affairs Interim Committee examined the high rate of suicide in Montana among veterans;

WHEREAS, the committee learned that of the 555 suicides in Montana that occurred between January 1, 2014, and March 1, 2016, most suicides are by white males ages 35 through 64, that 121 were by veterans, 42 were by American Indians, and that 27 were by youth from 11 to 17 years of age; and

WHEREAS, after investigating the causes of suicide and the federal, state, and local efforts to prevent suicide among veterans, the committee recognized that and that suicide prevention efforts must be aimed at all demographic groups in Montana and accomplished using various media, especially digital and social media; and

WHEREAS, the committee voted unanimously to enhance Montana's current state suicide prevention program by promoting a statewide, multimedia suicide prevention campaign for all ages, ethnic groups, and occupations that would help normalize

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awareness about suicide risks and suicide prevention efforts.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of the State of Montana:

Section 1. Section 53-21-1101, MCA, is amended to read:

"53-21-1101. Suicide prevention officer -- duties. (1) The department of public health and human services shall implement a suicide prevention program by January 1, 2008. The program must be administered by a suicide prevention officer attached to the office of the director of the department.

(2) The suicide prevention officer shall:

(a) coordinate all suicide prevention activities being conducted by the department, including activities in the addictive and mental disorders division, the health resources division, and the public health and safety division, and coordinate with any suicide prevention activities that are conducted by other state agencies, including the office of the superintendent of public instruction, the department of corrections, the department of military affairs, and the university system;

(b) develop a biennial suicide reduction plan that addresses reducing suicides by Montanans of all ages, ethnic groups, and occupations;

(c) direct a statewide suicide prevention program with activities that include but are not limited to:

(i) conducting statewide public awareness campaigns aimed at normalizing the need for all Montanans to address mental

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health problems and utilizing both paid and free media, including digital and social media, and including input from government agencies, school representatives from elementary schools through higher education, mental health advocacy groups, veteran groups, and other relevant nonprofit organizations;

(ii) initiating, in partnership with Montana's tribes and tribal organizations, a public awareness program that is culturally appropriate and that utilizes the modalities best suited for Indian country;

(iii) seeking opportunities for research that will improve understanding of suicide in Montana and provide increased suicide-related services;

(iv) training for medical professionals, military personnel, school personnel, social service providers, and the general public on recognizing the early warning signs of suicidality, depression, and other mental illnesses; and

(v) providing grants to communities or other government, nonprofit, or tribal entities to start new or sustain existing suicide prevention activities."

{*Internal References to 53-21-1101: None.*}

NEW SECTION. **Section 2. {standard} Notification to tribal governments.** The secretary of state shall send a copy of [this act] to each tribal government located on the seven Montana reservations and to the Little Shell Chippewa tribe.

NEW SECTION. **Section 3. Appropriation.** There is

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appropriated from the general fund to the department of public health and human services \$_____ for the statewide suicide prevention program provided for in 53-21-1101.

NEW SECTION. **Section 4. {standard} Effective date.** [This act] is effective July 1, 2017.

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