

# MEMORANDUM

Agenda Item No. 11(A)(2)

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**TO:** Honorable Chairman Esteban L. Bovo, Jr.  
and Members, Board of County Commissioners

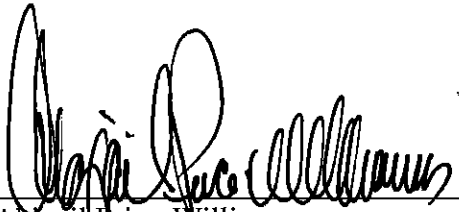
**DATE:** February 22, 2017

**FROM:** Abigail Price-Williams  
County Attorney

**SUBJECT:** Resolution urging the United States Congress to increase the appropriation of funds to the United States Department of Veterans Affairs for the implementation of additional Veteran Crisis Line Call Centers

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The accompanying resolution was prepared and placed on the agenda at the request of Prime Sponsor Commissioner Jose "Pepe" Diaz.

  
Abigail Price-Williams  
County Attorney

APW/smm



**MEMORANDUM**  
(Revised)

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County Attorney

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Please note any items checked.

- "3-Day Rule" for committees applicable if raised
- 6 weeks required between first reading and public hearing
- 4 weeks notification to municipal officials required prior to public hearing
- Decreases revenues or increases expenditures without balancing budget
- Budget required
- Statement of fiscal impact required
- Statement of social equity required
- Ordinance creating a new board requires detailed County Mayor's report for public hearing
- No committee review
- Applicable legislation requires more than a majority vote (i.e., 2/3's \_\_\_\_, 3/5's \_\_\_\_, unanimous \_\_\_\_ ) to approve
- Current information regarding funding source, index code and available balance, and available capacity (if debt is contemplated) required

Approved \_\_\_\_\_ Mayor

Agenda Item No. 11(A)(2)

Veto \_\_\_\_\_

2-22-17

Override \_\_\_\_\_

RESOLUTION NO. \_\_\_\_\_

RESOLUTION URGING THE UNITED STATES CONGRESS  
TO INCREASE THE APPROPRIATION OF FUNDS TO THE  
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS  
FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ADDITIONAL VETERAN  
CRISIS LINE CALL CENTERS

**WHEREAS**, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, in 2015, there were 18.8 million veterans in the nation; and

**WHEREAS**, these courageous men and women served in the Korean War, World War II, the Vietnam War, the Gulf War, and every other operation that involved members of the U.S. Armed Forces, and also served in times of peace; and

**WHEREAS**, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is responsible for providing vital services to America's veterans, which include health care services, benefits programs and access to national cemeteries to former military personnel and their dependents; and

**WHEREAS**, the VA recognizes that some veterans suffer from a wide range of mental or physical conditions, including, but not limited to depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), burns, loss of limbs, traumatic brain injuries, intermittent explosive disorder, suicidal thoughts and a host of other mental or physical disabilities, illnesses or disorders; and

**WHEREAS**, research shows that veterans suffer from some mental illnesses at higher rates than the general population; and

**WHEREAS**, for instance, while PTSD is not unique to veterans, veterans comprise a disproportionate amount of the population living with PTSD because of their increased exposure to traumatic situations; and

**WHEREAS**, statistics compiled by the VA indicate that 11 to 20 percent of veterans that served in Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom, 12 percent of veterans that served in Desert Storm and 15 percent of veterans that served in the Vietnam War have PTSD, as compared to 7 to 8 percent of the general population; and

**WHEREAS**, in 2014, although veterans constituted 8.5 percent of the population, they accounted for 18 percent of all deaths from suicide among adults in the United States; and

**WHEREAS**, according to a 2016 report published by the VA, which reviewed records from every state in the nation and analyzed 55 million veterans' records from 1979 to 2014, approximately 20 veterans die from suicide every day; and

**WHEREAS**, among other things, the VA operates the nation's largest integrated health care system, with more than 1,700 health care clinics, counseling centers and other facilities; and

**WHEREAS**, in an effort to reduce veteran suicide, the VA also offers a free and confidential Veterans Crisis Line (Crisis Line) that is available 24 hours a day and seven days a week via telephone call, text message or online chat for veterans and service members in emotional crisis, or any person concerned about a veteran; and

**WHEREAS**, some Crisis Line responders are veterans, and all responders are intensively trained to counsel veterans and service members of all ages and service eras; and

**WHEREAS**, Crisis Line callers seek assistance for a wide array of problems or concerns, some of which are critical and require urgent attention and emergency services, ranging from referrals to appropriate community resources, local VA facilities or emergency personnel being sent to a veteran's home for immediate help; and

**WHEREAS**, since its inception in 2007 through September 2016, the VA reports more than 2.5 million calls to the Crisis Line were answered and resulted in emergency services being dispatched approximately 66,000 times; and

**WHEREAS**, likewise, there have been nearly 308,000 online chats since that feature was added to the Crisis Line in 2009, and responses to more than 60,000 text communications since the introduction of text messaging in 2011; and

**WHEREAS**, veterans and service members in crisis who attempt to contact the Crisis Line, whether through a telephone call, online chat or text message, are supposed to receive immediate responses and appropriate follow-up care; and

**WHEREAS**, unfortunately, despite the reported numbers of veterans who contacted the Crisis Line, not all veterans received immediate responses; and

**WHEREAS**, in February 2016, the VA's Office of Inspector General reported that more than one-third of calls and electronic communications to the Crisis Line were not being answered by front-line staffers, if at all, because of poor work habits and other problems; and

**WHEREAS**, in light of allegations that veterans contacting the Crisis Line did not receive timely responses, the 114th Congress approved H.R. 5392, the No Veterans Crisis Line Call Should Go Unanswered Act (Act), which was subsequently signed into law by the President on November 28, 2016; and

**WHEREAS**, the Act directs the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to develop a quality assurance document to improve the Crisis Line and a plan to ensure that each communication received by the Crisis Line is answered in a timely manner by a qualified responder; and

**WHEREAS**, because many Crisis Line responders are specially trained veterans who are more likely to understand what veterans and their families and friends have been through, additional Veterans Crisis Line Call Centers could serve a dual purpose, simultaneously helping and employing veterans; and

**WHEREAS**, additional Crisis Line Call Centers would improve the current network, and further the VA's mandate and goal to provide early and immediate crisis intervention, proactive engagement and support to veterans in emotional and mental health crises,

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF MIAMI-DADE COUNTY, FLORIDA**, that this Board:

**Section 1.** Approves the foregoing recitals, which are incorporated herein by reference.

**Section 2.** Urges the United States Congress to pass legislation to increase the appropriation of funds to the United States Department of Veterans Affairs for the implementation of additional Veterans Crisis Line Call Centers.

**Section 3.** Directs the Clerk of the Board to transmit a certified copy of this resolution to the Members of the Florida Congressional Delegation and the United States Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

**Section 4.** Directs the County's federal lobbyists to advocate for the legislative action set forth in Section 2 above, and authorizes and directs the Office of Intergovernmental Affairs to include this item in the 2017 Federal Legislative Package when it is presented to the Board.

The Prime Sponsor of the foregoing resolution is Commissioner Jose "Pepe" Diaz. It was offered by Commissioner \_\_\_\_\_, who moved its adoption. The motion was seconded by Commissioner \_\_\_\_\_ and upon being put to a vote, the vote was as follows:

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Esteban L. Bovo, Jr., Chairman	
Audrey M. Edmonson, Vice Chairwoman	
Bruno A. Barreiro	Daniella Levine Cava
Jose "Pepe" Diaz	Sally A. Heyman
Barbara J. Jordan	Joe A. Martinez
Jean Moncstine	Dennis C. Moss
Rebeca Sosa	Sen. Javier D. Souto
Xavier L. Suarez	


The Chairperson thereupon declared the resolution duly passed and adopted this 22<sup>nd</sup> day of February, 2017. This resolution shall become effective upon the earlier of (1) 10 days after the date of its adoption unless vetoed by the County Mayor, and if vetoed, shall become effective only upon an override by this Board, or (2) approval by the County Mayor of this Resolution and the filing of this approval with the Clerk of the Board.

MIAMI-DADE COUNTY, FLORIDA  
BY ITS BOARD OF  
COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

HARVEY RUVIN, CLERK

By: \_\_\_\_\_  
Deputy Clerk

Approved by County Attorney as  
to form and legal sufficiency.



Shanika A. Graves