

# MEMORANDUM

Agenda Item No. 11(A)(9)

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**TO:** Honorable Chairman Jose "Pepe" Diaz  
and Members, Board of County Commissioners

**DATE:** February 2, 2021

**FROM:** Geri Bonzon-Keenan  
Successor County Attorney

**SUBJECT:** Resolution urging the Florida Legislature to enact Senate Bill 260, House Bill 231, or similar legislation that would require the Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs to establish the Florida Veterans' Care Coordination Program or a similar program to provide veterans and their families with behavioral health care referral and care coordination services

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

  
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Geri Bonzon-Keenan  
Successor County Attorney

GBK/jp




## MEMORANDUM

(Revised)

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and Members, Board of County Commissioners

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**FROM:**   
Gen Bonzon-Keenan  
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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 present \_\_\_\_, 2/3 membership \_\_\_\_, 3/5's \_\_\_\_, unanimous \_\_\_\_, CDMP 7 vote requirement per 2-116.1(3)(h) or (4)(c) \_\_\_\_, CDMP 2/3 vote requirement per 2-116.1(3)(h) or (4)(c) \_\_\_\_, or CDMP 9 vote requirement per 2-116.1(4)(c)(2) \_\_\_\_ to approve
- ☐ Current information regarding funding source, index code and available balance, and available capacity (if debt is contemplated) required

Approved \_\_\_\_\_ Mayor  
Veto \_\_\_\_\_  
Override \_\_\_\_\_

Agenda Item No. 11(A)(9)  
2-2-21

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

RESOLUTION URGING THE FLORIDA LEGISLATURE TO ENACT SENATE BILL 260, HOUSE BILL 231, OR SIMILAR LEGISLATION THAT WOULD REQUIRE THE FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS TO ESTABLISH THE FLORIDA VETERANS' CARE COORDINATION PROGRAM OR A SIMILAR PROGRAM TO PROVIDE VETERANS AND THEIR FAMILIES WITH BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CARE REFERRAL AND CARE COORDINATION SERVICES

**WHEREAS**, according to the United States Census Bureau ("Census Bureau"), in 2019, approximately 17.4 million veterans lived in the United States; and

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

**WHEREAS**, using Census Bureau data, in an August 30, 2020 article, *The Center Square* reported that over 1.4 million veterans resided in the state and accounted for over 8 percent of its population; and

**WHEREAS**, a number of 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; and

**WHEREAS**, statistics compiled by the Department of Veterans Affairs (“V.A.”) 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**, a 2016 report published by the V.A., which considered records from every state in the nation and analyzed 55 million veterans’ records from 1979 through 2014, noted that approximately 20 veterans died from suicide every day; and

**WHEREAS**, additionally, at that time, the V.A. reported that during the period from 2001 through 2014, veterans demonstrated an increased risk of suicide when compared to their non-veteran peers; and

**WHEREAS**, however, in its 2020 National Veteran Suicide Prevention Annual Report (“Annual Report”), the V.A. indicated that the number of veterans who died from suicide had declined and, in 2018, was about 17 per day; and

**WHEREAS**, moreover, the Annual Report shows that, from 2017 – 2018, the suicide rate among veterans who received V.A. care declined by 2.4 percent, while the rates for veterans who did not receive such care increased by 2.5 percent; and

**WHEREAS**, although the V.A. is charged with providing health care services to the nation’s veterans and operates the nation’s largest integrated health care system, with more than 1,700 health care clinics, counseling centers, and other facilities, a study conducted by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, a branch of the United States

Department of Health and Human Services, revealed that only 50 percent of returning veterans who need veteran mental health treatment receive such services; and

**WHEREAS**, in light of the troubling statistics concerning the mental health of the nation's veterans and in an effort to further assist veterans with their mental health needs, Senator Gayle Harrell (R-Stuart) filed Senate Bill ("SB") 260 on December 14, 2020 and Representative Ardian Zika (R-Land O'Lakes) filed House Bill ("HB") 231 on January 13, 2021; and

**WHEREAS**, if enacted, SB 260 and HB 231 would require the Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs to establish the Florida Veterans' Care Coordination Program (the "Program"), a statewide program that, among other things, will provide veterans and their families with dedicated behavioral health care referral services, including mental health and substance abuse services through program teams operated by Florida 211 Network participants; and

**WHEREAS**, through the Program, veterans and their families will be provided referral and care coordination services with goals of preventing veterans' suicides, increasing veterans' use of programs and services provided by the V.A., and increasing the number of veterans who use other available community-based programs and services; and

**WHEREAS**, mental health and coordinated care services are essential to help veterans with their health needs, which range from routine to complex and often include a combination of physical and mental health illnesses; and

**WHEREAS**, a statewide initiative providing for referrals and coordinated care to veterans would likely result in fewer veterans dying by suicide as well as provide other services to benefit their health and assist them with reintegrating into their communities; and

**WHEREAS**, this Board supports measures designed to support veterans by expanding health and other community-based services and making such resources readily available to them and their families,

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

**Section 1.** Urges the Florida Legislature to enact Senate Bill 260, House Bill 231, or similar legislation that would require the Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs to establish the Florida Veterans' Care Coordination Program or a similar program to provide veterans and their families with behavioral health care referral and care coordination services.

**Section 2.** Directs the Clerk of the Board to transmit a certified copy of this resolution to the Governor, Senate President, House Speaker, Senator Gayle Harrell, Representative Ardian Zika, the Chair and Members of the Miami-Dade County State Legislative Delegation, and the Executive Director of the Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs.

**Section 3.** Directs the County's state lobbyists to advocate for the legislative action set forth in section 1 above, and authorizes and directs the Office of Intergovernmental Affairs to amend the 2021 State Legislative Package to include this item.

The Prime Sponsor of the foregoing resolution is Chairman 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:

Jose "Pepe" Diaz, Chairman

Oliver G. Gilbert, III, Vice-Chairman

Sen. René García

Sally A. Heyman

Eileen Higgins

Kionne L. McGhee

Raquel A. Regalado

Sen. Javier D. Souto

Keon Hardemon

Danielle Cohen Higgins

Joe A. Martinez

Jean Monestime

Rebeca Sosa

The Chairperson thereupon declared this resolution duly passed and adopted this 2<sup>nd</sup> day of February, 2021. 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