

Department of Planning and Budget
2026 General Assembly Session
State Fiscal Impact Statement

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ORIGINAL

Bill Number: HB529

Patron: Thornton

Bill Title: Suicide Prevention Program created; deaths by suicide of veterans or military service members; inquiry by State Registrar of Vital Records; Department of Veterans Services annual report.

Bill Summary: Removes the position of Suicide Prevention Coordinator within the Department of Veterans Services, transfers the duties of such position to the Suicide Prevention Program, established in the Department by the bill, and adds the following to such duties: (i) gather data on substance abuse challenges experienced by military service members, veterans, and their families that may lead to suicide; (ii) collaborate with federal, state, and local partners to increase substance use screenings and refer military service members, veterans, and their family members to the appropriate professionals or services; (iii) provide opioid addiction and substance use resources, training, and support to federal, state, and local agencies; and (iv) compile and analyze data relating to the suicides of veterans and military service members pursuant to death certificates filed with the State Registrar of Vital Records, with such data to be included in the Department's annual report. The bill provides that in any case where the death certificate of a veteran or military service member lists suicide as the cause and manner of death, the State Registrar of Vital Records shall provide such information concerning the suicide to the Department. Finally, the bill requires a copy of any autopsy report concerning the suicide of a veteran or military service member to be furnished upon request to the Commissioner of the Department and requires the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner to notify any decedent's next of kin when the Office releases such autopsy report to the decedent's attending physician and to the personal representative or executor of the decedent.

Budget Amendment Necessary: Yes

Items Impacted: Item 276

Explanation: See below

Fiscal Summary: There is an anticipated impact on the Department of Health.

General Fund Expenditure Impact:

Agency	FY2026	FY2027	FY2028	FY2029	FY2030	FY2031
Dept. of Veterans Services		\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Dept. of Health		\$295,204	\$295,204	\$295,204	\$295,204	\$295,204
TOTAL		\$295,204	\$295,204	\$295,204	\$295,204	\$295,204

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Fiscal Analysis: The Department of Veterans Services (DVS) indicated that existing programs and funding could be utilized to meet the intent and requirements of this proposal.

The provisions in this legislation would have a fiscal impact on the Virginia Department of Health (VDH) Office of the Chief Medical Examiner (OCME). The bill states, “Upon request, the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner shall release such autopsy report to the decedent's attending physician and to the personal representative or executor of the decedent and shall notify such decedent's next of kin that such autopsy report has been released.” As written, this would require OCME to notify the next-of-kin every time they release a copy of the autopsy report to a decedent's attending physician and to the personal representative. The language does not limit such notification only to veterans who died from suicide. This would be a significant increase in workload to identify the next-of-kin, ensure the information is accurate, and provide notice for all autopsy reports. In order for the OCME to meet the requirements of this legislation, the OCME will need to hire a wage staff member for each district office (Central, Northern, Tidewater, and Western), for a total of four wage staff positions. These staff members will be required to research the decedent's next-of-kin to ensure proper notification is being made.

OCME estimates the cost for one wage position would be \$73,801. This includes wages for 1,500 hours annually at \$25 an hour, FICA, VITA, and telephone. Four wage positions would cost \$295,204 annually.

Other: None.