HB197

QPGN151-1

By Representatives Brown, Oliver, Starnes, Jackson, Jones, Rogers, Robertson, Sellers, Crawford, Rehm, Wood (R), Smith, Paschal, Hill, Carns

RFD: Military and Veterans Affairs

First Read: 20-Feb-24

SYNOPSIS:

This bill would authorize the Alabama Department of Veterans Affairs to establish and operate a statewide integrated health care system dedicated to Alabama veterans and their immediate family members, consisting of comprehensive in-patient facilities and outpatient clinics to address the health care needs affecting Alabama veterans.

A BILL

TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

Relating to the Department of Veterans Affairs; to add Chapter 5B to Title 31, Code of Alabama 1975, to authorize the Department of Veterans Affairs to establish and operate a statewide integrated health care system dedicated to Alabama veterans and their immediate families.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF ALABAMA:

Section 1. Chapter 5B is added to Title 31, Code of Alabama 1975, to read as follows:

§31-5B-1

As used in this chapter, the following terms have the following meanings:

(1) BOARD. The State Board of Veterans Affairs.

(2) COMMISSIONER. The Chief Executive Officer of the State Department of Veterans Affairs.

(3) DEPARTMENT. The Alabama Department of Veterans Affairs.

(4) PLAN. The comprehensive plan, as may be amended from time to time, of the Alabama Department of Veterans Affairs to establish and operate a statewide integrated health care system dedicated to Alabama veterans and their immediate families to deliver primary care, behavioral health care, and social services.

(5) VETERAN.

a. Any individual who served in the active military, naval, air, or space forces of the United States who was discharged or released under conditions other than dishonorable.

b. Any individual who is entitled, under Title 10 U.S.C. Chapter 1223, to retired pay for nonregular service or, but for age, would be entitled under that chapter to retired pay for nonregular service.

§31-5B-2

The department, acting through its board and its commissioner, shall establish an integrated health care system dedicated to Alabama veterans and their immediate families to provide coordination of care in primary care, behavioral health care, and social services.

(1) The department shall create and implement a comprehensive plan to deliver primary care, behavioral health

care, and social services to veterans statewide and to establish programs and priorities for organizational and administrative purposes in accordance with the plan.

(2) The department shall establish, supervise, and coordinate standards for all operations and activities necessary or required to develop and deliver integrated primary care, behavioral health care, and social services to veterans in accordance with the plan and may do all of the following:

a. Adopt rules and policies to carry out its duties in accordance with the plan.

b. Receive and administer any funds available from any federal, state, or private source for the purpose of delivering services to veterans in accordance with the plan.

c. Acquire, receive, take title to, purchase, gift, lease, devise or otherwise, to hold, keep, and develop, and to transfer, convey, lease, assign, or otherwise dispose of property of every kind and character, and any and every interest therein, to or from any individual or organization.

d. Undertake and to make or cause to be made, either singly or in conjunction or cooperation with others, appropriate studies, surveys, arrangements, undertakings, and construction designs and plans, and supervision relating to, directly or indirectly, the restoration, renovation, improvement, or maintenance of any property for the purpose of implementing any portion of the plan.

e. Make, enter into, and execute contracts, agreements, leases, and other legal arrangements, and to take any other

steps and actions as may be necessary or appropriate to implement any portion of the plan.

f. Borrow money for any purpose necessary or appropriate to implement the plan.

g. Invest any of its funds not presently necessary for operations in bonds, bills, or notes of the United States, bonds of the state, and interest-bearing deposits in banks and savings and loan institutions.

h. Provide for any insurance required or advisable in the discretion of the board.

i. Establish and maintain reasonable minimum policies and standards for the employment of professional and administrative staff and the admission, diagnosis, care, and treatment of patients in facilities operated in accordance with the plan.

j. Establish and maintain reasonable minimum standards for the maintenance and preservation of patient records, including minimum standards for maintaining patient confidentiality, in facilities operated in accordance with the plan.

k. Enter into contracts with any person, state or federal agency, or organization capable of contracting for equipment, goods, and services necessary to carry out the terms of the plan.

l. Cooperate with the United States and any federal agency, including the United States Department of Veterans Affairs, and the State of Alabama, and any county or municipality of the state, to make and enter into contracts

and all manner of legal arrangements to obtain money by way of loans, grants, or payments, or property, or other forms of assistance as the board may deem advisable in its discretion to implement the terms of the plan.

m. Carry out all of its functions, exercise all of its powers, and conduct all of its business and affairs without regard to Sections 41-16-50 through 41-16-63, or any similar law pertaining to competitive bidding, which might otherwise be applicable.

n. Create and appoint members of advisory committees as needed from those leaders in primary care, behavioral health care, social services, and from the public generally, including veterans, to advise the department in regard to plans, programs, and rules pertaining to the plan and its implementation. The members of advisory committees shall be entitled to be reimbursed for mileage expenses, not to exceed the amount prescribed by state law.

Section 2. This act shall become effective on October 1, 2024.