

Date of Hearing: May 12, 2021

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Lorena Gonzalez, Chair

AB 1470 (Mathis) – As Amended April 20, 2021

Policy Committee:	Health	Vote:	15 - 0
	Military and Veterans Affairs		11 - 0

Urgency: No State Mandated Local Program: No Reimbursable: No

SUMMARY:

This bill requires the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) to establish the End Military Suicide Task Force (Task Force) to systematically reduce, on an annual basis, military suicides and to provide a plan by June 1, 2023, for the elimination of all military suicides in the state by January 1, 2029.

FISCAL EFFECT:

\$485,000 for the first year and \$330,000 ongoing to CDPH for staff and contract costs to convene the Task Force for multiple meetings using a professional facilitator, develop recommendations, prepare the plan, analyze data, and perform evaluations and develop the annual reports.

COMMENTS:

- 1) **Purpose.** According to the author, a task force is an essential mechanism to tackle the rising numbers of military suicides. This bill is sponsored by the National Guard Association of California (NGAC) and supported by other military and veterans' advocacy groups. According to the sponsor, data from the Department of Veterans Affairs shows that not only is the suicide rate for veterans 1.5 times higher than for non-veterans, but that this number has increased significantly since 2005.

NGAC notes access to mental health care services for National Guard members or reservists is especially difficult, with many living in dispersed areas of the state distant from military installations.

- 2) **Background.** Veterans also have an elevated suicide risk compared to their civilian counterparts, with veterans accounting for an estimated 18% of all adult suicide deaths in the U.S.

AB 2112 (Ramos) of 2020, Chapter 142, Statutes of 2020, authorized CDPH to establish the Office of Suicide Prevention. The Governor's Budget includes a Budget Change Proposal (BCP), released April 1, 2021, to establish the office. This proposal is pending consideration by the Legislature. The BCP requests five positions and \$780,235 General Fund appropriation in 2021-22 and ongoing to fund the office. The administration also proposed trailer bill language to strike a provision put into place by AB 2112 that requires the duties and responsibilities of the office be accomplished with existing staff and resources.

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