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(Original Signature of Member)

113TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R.

To amend title 10, United States Code, to provide an individual with a mental health assessment before the individual enlists in the Armed Forces or is commissioned as an officer in the Armed Forces.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on _____

A BILL

To amend title 10, United States Code, to provide an individual with a mental health assessment before the individual enlists in the Armed Forces or is commissioned as an officer in the Armed Forces.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Medical Evaluation
5 Parity for Servicemembers Act of 2014” or the “MEPS
6 Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

2 Congress finds the following:

3 (1) More focus needs to be put on mental
4 health in America.

5 (2) The large number of suicides among vet-
6 erans and members the Armed Forces is unaccept-
7 able, especially given that more members have died
8 by suicide than in combat.

9 (3) Many of those suicides in the military were
10 members of the Armed Forces who never deployed.

11 (4) Members of the Armed Forces, having been
12 at war for more than a decade, have been put
13 through acute physical and mental stress.

14 (5) Many of the suicides in the Armed Forces
15 can be prevented, and studies have found that im-
16 proved screening reduced later behavioral problems
17 by 78 percent and reduced thoughts of suicide by
18 more than half.

19 (6) Although the military currently has a base-
20 line measurement process for physical health, the
21 military does not currently have similar standards
22 for mental health.

23 (7) It is important that the military ensures
24 that the members of the Armed Forces are both
25 physically and mentally fit for all the missions the
26 United States requires.

1 **SEC. 3. PRELIMINARY MENTAL HEALTH ASSESSMENTS.**

2 (a) IN GENERAL.—Chapter 31 of title 10, United
3 States Code, is amended by adding at the end the fol-
4 lowing new section:

5 **“§ 520d. Preliminary mental health assessments**

6 “(a) PROVISION OF MENTAL HEALTH ASSESS-
7 MENT.—Before any individual enlists in an armed force
8 or is commissioned as an officer in an armed force, the
9 Secretary concerned shall provide the individual with a
10 mental health assessment. The Secretary shall use such
11 results as a baseline for any subsequent mental health ex-
12 aminations, including such examinations provided under
13 sections 1074f and 1074m of this title.

14 “(b) USE OF ASSESSMENT.—The Secretary may not
15 consider the results of a mental health assessment con-
16 ducted under subsection (a) in determining the assign-
17 ment or promotion of a member of the armed forces.

18 “(c) APPLICATION OF PRIVACY LAWS.—With respect
19 to applicable laws and regulations relating to the privacy
20 of information, the Secretary shall treat a mental health
21 assessment conducted under subsection (a) in the same
22 manner as the medical records of a member of the Armed
23 Forces.”.

24 (b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections
25 at the beginning of such chapter is amended by adding

1 after the item relating to section 520c the following new
2 item:

“520d. Preliminary mental health assessments.”.

3 (c) REPORT.—

4 (1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 180 days
5 after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Na-
6 tional Institute of Mental Health of the National In-
7 stitutes of Health shall submit to Congress and the
8 Secretary of Defense a report on preliminary mental
9 health assessments of members of the Armed
10 Forces.

11 (2) MATTERS INCLUDED.—The report under
12 paragraph (1) shall include the following:

13 (A) Recommendations with respect to es-
14 tablishing a preliminary mental health assess-
15 ment of members of the Armed Forces to bring
16 mental health screenings to parity with physical
17 screenings of members.

18 (B) Recommendations with respect to the
19 composition of the mental health assessment,
20 best practices, and how to track assessment
21 changes relating to traumatic brain injuries,
22 post-traumatic stress disorder, and other condi-
23 tions.

24 (3) COORDINATION.—The National Institute of
25 Mental Health shall carry out paragraph (1) in co-

1 ordination with the Secretary of Veterans Affairs,
2 the Director of the Centers for Disease Control and
3 Prevention, the surgeon generals of the military de-
4 partments, and other relevant experts.