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## FISCAL IMPACT REPORT

**BILL NUMBER:** House Bill 56

**SHORT TITLE:** Veteran Behavioral Health Services

**SPONSOR:** Martinez, A/Dow/Block

**LAST ORIGINAL**  
**UPDATE:** \_\_\_\_\_ **DATE:** 1/24/26 **ANALYST:** Hilla

### APPROPRIATION\* (dollars in thousands)

FY26	FY27	Recurring or Nonrecurring	Fund Affected
	\$1,000.0	Recurring	General Fund

\*Amounts reflect most recent analysis of this legislation.

### ESTIMATED ADDITIONAL OPERATING BUDGET IMPACT\* (dollars in thousands)

Agency/Program	FY26	FY27	FY28	3 Year Total Cost	Recurring or Nonrecurring	Fund Affected
VSD	No fiscal impact	\$200.0	No fiscal impact	\$200.0	Nonrecurring	General Fund
Total	No fiscal impact	\$200.0	No fiscal impact	\$200.0	Nonrecurring	General Fund

Parentheses ( ) indicate expenditure decreases.

\*Amounts reflect most recent analysis of this legislation.

Relates to House Bill 33

Relates to Appropriations in the Executive Budget Recommendation

### Sources of Information

LFC Files

#### Agency or Agencies Providing Analysis

Veterans' Services Department

Health Care Authority

Department of Health

## SUMMARY

### Synopsis of House Bill 56

House Bill 56 (HB56) appropriates \$1 million from the general to the Veterans' Services Department (VSD) for expenditure in FY27 to assist veterans and their families in identifying and accessing behavioral health care services.

This bill does not contain an effective date and, as a result, would go into effect 90 days after the Legislature adjourns, which is May 20, 2026.

## **FISCAL IMPLICATIONS**

The appropriation of \$1 million contained in this bill is a recurring expense to the general fund. Any unexpended or unencumbered balance remaining at the end of FY27 shall revert to the general fund. Although House Bill 56 does not specify future appropriations, establishing a new program could create an expectation the program will continue in future fiscal years; therefore, this cost is assumed to be recurring.

VSD states it will need two term employees to implement the services envisioned in the bill, which is estimated to cost \$200 thousand including salary, benefits, and training. This will affect the agency's general fund operating budget. Term positions do not affect the agency's recurring operating budget.

This specific appropriation is not in the LFC nor in the Executive budget recommendations.

## **SIGNIFICANT ISSUES**

As stated in the VSD's analysis, the broad scope of the bill would allow the department to contract for direct services for veterans and their families as well as help build the behavioral health capacity in the state. The department could include public awareness through public media and information materials to ensure veterans and families are aware of available resources in addition to VSD implementing direct services.

The Department of Health (DOH) notes that of the 4,521 overdose deaths of New Mexico residents from 2020 to 2024, 6.3 percent, or 284, were residents of the state who had served in the US armed forces. For alcohol-attributable deaths during this same time period, state veterans made up 12.2 percent or 1,172 deaths of the total 9,622 alcohol-related deaths.

The 2022 veteran suicide rate in the state was higher than the national average. In New Mexico, veteran suicide was 46.2 per 100,000 population compared to the national rate of 34.7 per 100,000 population, as noted by DOH.

## **CONFLICT, DUPLICATION, COMPANIONSHIP, RELATIONSHIP**

HB56 relates to House Bill 32 (HB32), which would create a professional licensure and counseling compact. Should HB32 be enacted, it would increase the number of available licensed counselors by allowing other qualified practitioners in other states to provide services to veterans in the state.

This appropriation is similar to a \$500 thousand general fund appropriation in the Executive budget recommendation to VSD for outreach services to veterans and their families in underserved communities, but this appropriation is not specific towards behavioral health care services. The Executive budget recommendation also includes \$200 thousand in a nonrecurring special general fund appropriation for VSD to implement suicide prevention and outreach services to veterans and their families.