

Submitter: Connie Hunter  
On Behalf Of: CCSAPC Veterans Task Force  
Committee: House Committee On Emergency Management, General  
Government, and Veterans  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2845

Thank you, Chair Tran, Vice Chairs Grayber and Lewis, and members of the Committee,

Sharing written testimony in support of HB 2845....My name is Connie Hunter, Director of the Veterans Task Force for the Curry County Suicide Awareness and Prevention Council which was created by ordinance to address the high rates of suicide among our seniors, youth and veterans. It has been a daunting task to keep the Council sustained through the COVID pandemic natural disasters and the fact that our frontline efforts are often stressful.

Regarding HB 2845, there are many necessary and/or significant aspects to this legislation in support of ODVA staffing and suicide prevention funding--which I wholeheartedly support.

Suicide prevention has been hard fought, especially in rural areas, when the "boots on the ground" are volunteers--and, in the case of veterans, many veterans are at high risk for suicide, themselves. I know this only too well as we have lost one of our Team members within the last year to suicide. Her name was Jeanne Gray Boom. She could make me laugh and would tell me she was going to kick my you know what if I didn't take some time for myself. She is missed greatly by her mother, children and team members. She had experienced Military Sexual Trauma.

Please note that my first experience with veterans suicide was when I was 16 years old. His name was Michael Gene Jones. Mike was Native American, serving honorably in the Army infantry. I will be 70 years old in a few months and note my advocacy has spanned those years with many great uplifting stories and positive outcomes. However, I have to account here to this esteemed committee that each year since my 16 year of life, I have personally known at least one veteran per year who has taken their own life.

The gravity of those losses will forever be the hurricane wind beneath my wings, compelled by compassion, to work longer, harder and smarter on behalf of our veterans who are at high risk for suicide. HB 2845 is a great jumping off point to better address the funding and program needs of rural areas. Please help!

It is with hope and plea that this committee unanimously support this legislation.

Connie Hunter  
Serving Our Veterans on the  
Curry County Suicide Awareness and Prevention Council