

By Senator Burgess

23-00521A-23

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1 A bill to be entitled
2 An act relating to dental services for veterans;
3 creating s. 295.157, F.S.; providing legislative
4 findings and intent; defining terms; establishing the
5 Veterans Dental Care Grant Program in the Department
6 of Veterans' Affairs; specifying the purpose of the
7 program; requiring the department to contract with a
8 direct-service organization to administer the program;
9 requiring the department to adopt rules; providing
10 that program funding is subject to legislative
11 appropriation; providing an effective date.

12
13 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

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15 Section 1. Section 295.157, Florida Statutes, is created to
16 read:

17 295.157 Veterans Dental Care Grant Program.—

18 (1) The Legislature finds that veterans are not afforded
19 dental care after serving in the United States Armed Forces
20 unless they are totally and permanently disabled or have a
21 direct service-connected injury impacting their oral health. The
22 Legislature further finds that this has left many veterans
23 without access to routine dental care for many years and has
24 resulted in severe dental conditions that worsen due to a lack
25 of access to proper dental treatment. It is the intent of the
26 Legislature to create the Veterans Dental Care Grant Program to
27 provide veterans the opportunity to access routine dental care
28 after they conclude their service protecting this country's
29 freedom.

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30 (2) As used in this section, the term:

31 (a) "Department" means the Department of Veterans' Affairs.

32 (b) "Veteran" has the same meaning as in s. 1.01(14). The
33 term includes all members of the Florida National Guard and
34 United States Reserve Forces who were discharged or released
35 under honorable conditions only, or who later received an
36 upgraded discharge under honorable conditions.

37 (3) The Veterans Dental Care Grant Program is established
38 within the Department of Veterans' Affairs. The purpose of the
39 program is to provide oral health care to veterans who reside in
40 this state.

41 (4) The department shall contract with a statewide direct-
42 service organization to administer the Veterans Dental Care
43 Grant Program. The statewide direct-service organization must
44 have proven experience developing and implementing veteran-
45 relevant programs, including dental service programs. The
46 organization is responsible for distributing grants to eligible
47 nonprofits that have experience in providing dental care to
48 veterans.

49 (5) The department shall adopt rules to administer the
50 program.

51 (6) Funding for the program is subject to appropriation by
52 the Legislature.

53 Section 2. This act shall take effect July 1, 2023.