

By the Committee on Military and Veterans Affairs, Space, and Domestic Security; and Senators Burgess, Perry, and Gruters

583-03299-23

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

14
15 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

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17 Section 1. Section 295.157, Florida Statutes, is created to
18 read:

19 295.157 Veterans Dental Care Grant Program.—

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

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30 the opportunity to access routine dental care after they
31 conclude their service protecting this country's freedom.

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

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

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

39 (3) The Veterans Dental Care Grant Program is established
40 within the Department of Veterans' Affairs. The purpose of the
41 program is to provide oral health care to indigent veterans who
42 reside in underserved and critical need areas of this state.

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

51 (b) The department shall use the standard for determining
52 indigency provided by the Federal Poverty Income Guidelines
53 produced by the United States Department of Health and Human
54 Services.

55 (5) The department shall define by rule the terms "indigent
56 veteran" and "underserved and critical need area" and shall
57 adopt rules to administer the program.

58 (6) Funding for the program is subject to appropriation by

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59 the Legislature.

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