

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

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

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

295.157 Veterans Dental Care Grant Program.—

(1) The Legislature finds that veterans are not afforded dental care after serving in the United States Armed Forces unless they are totally and permanently disabled or have a direct service-connected injury impacting their oral health. The Legislature further finds that this has left many veterans without access to routine dental care for many years and has resulted in severe dental conditions that worsen due to a lack 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.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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51 | program.

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

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