HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STAFF ANALYSIS

BILL #: PCS for HB 131 Military Medics and Corpsmen of Florida Program
SPONSOR(S): Professions & Public Health Subcommittee
TIED BILLS: **IDEN./SIM. BILLS:**

REFERENCE	ACTION	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR or BUDGET/POLICY CHIEF
Orig. Comm.: Professions & Public Health Subcommittee		Morris	McElroy

SUMMARY ANALYSIS

Florida is home to approximately 1.5 million veterans. Each year, about 200,000 servicemembers end military service as veterans and either reenter the civilian workforce or enroll in higher education.

Florida is for Veterans, Inc. (Veterans Florida), a non-profit corporation within the Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs (FDVA), promotes Florida as a veteran-friendly state. Veterans Florida encourages and assists retired and recently separated military personnel to keep or make Florida their permanent residence, helps equip veterans for employment opportunities, and promotes the hiring of veterans.

Veterans Florida also administers the Veterans Employment and Training Services Program which links veterans in search of employment with businesses seeking to hire dedicated, well-trained workers. The purpose of the program is to meet the workforce demands of businesses in the state by facilitating access to training and education in high-demand fields for veterans.

PCS for HB 131 directs Veterans Florida to assist veterans who have health care services experience in the armed services with accessing training, education, and employment in health professions related to the veteran's service experience.

The bill has no fiscal impact on FDVA or local governments.

The bill provides an effective date of July 1, 2022.

FULL ANALYSIS

I. SUBSTANTIVE ANALYSIS

A. EFFECT OF PROPOSED CHANGES:

Background

Servicemembers Transitioning to Civilian Status

Each year, about 200,000 servicemembers end military service as veterans and either reenter the civilian workforce or enroll in higher education.[1] Florida is home to 20 military installations[2] and 69,290 military personnel.[3] Florida also has the nation's third-largest veteran[4] population with roughly 1.5 million veterans.[5] Many of these veterans are recently transitioned servicemembers.

Veterans Florida

Veterans Florida,[6] a non-profit corporation within the Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs, was created to promote Florida as a veteran-friendly state.[7] Veterans Florida encourages and assists retired and recently separated military personnel to keep or make Florida their permanent residence, helps equip veterans for employment opportunities, and promotes the hiring of veterans.[8] In Fiscal Year 2020-2021, Veterans Florida assisted 2,697 veterans with career assistance and job placement.[9]

Duties of Veterans Florida include:[10]

- Conducting research to identify the target market and the educational and employment needs of veterans and contract with at least one entity to perform the research.
- Advising the Florida Tourism Industry Marketing Corporation on:
  - The target market;
  - Development and implementation of a marketing campaign to encourage servicemembers to remain in Florida or to make Florida their permanent residence; and
  - Methods for disseminating information to the target market that relate to interests and needs of veterans and facilitate veterans' knowledge of and access to benefits.
- Promoting and enhancing the value of military skill sets to businesses.
- Implementing the Veterans Employment and Training Services Program.
- Managing all appropriated funds to ensure the use of such funds conforms to all applicable laws, bylaws, or contractual requirements.

Veterans Employment and Training Services Program

Veterans Florida administers the Veterans Employment and Training Services Program (Program) to assist in linking veterans in search of employment with businesses seeking to hire dedicated, well-

[1] Department of Defense SkillBridge, *Industry Partners and Employers,* https://dodskillbridge.usalearning.gov/industry-employers.htm (last visited Feb. 9, 2022).
[2] Enterprise Florida, *Florida's Military Profile,* https://www.enterpriseflorida.com/wp-content/uploads/Floridas-Military-Installations-Map.pdf (last visited Feb. 9, 2022).
[3] Florida Military & Defense, *Economic Impact Summary,* (2022), https://www.enterpriseflorida.com/wp-content/uploads/Florida-2022-EIS-Summary-Book-Final.pdf (last visited Feb. 9, 2022).
[4] Section 1.01(14), F.S., defines a "veteran" as a person who served in the active military, naval, or air service and who was discharged or released under honorable conditions, or who later received an upgraded discharge under honorable conditions.
[5] *Supra*, note 3.
[6] In 2015, the Florida Is For Veterans, Inc., Board of Directors approved the fictitious name "Veterans Florida." *See* at http://dos.sunbiz.org/scripts/ficidet.exe?action=DETREG&docnum=G15000027981&rdocnum=G15000027981 (last visited Feb. 9 ,2022). *See also* s. 295.21(5)(e), F.S.
[7] S. 295.21(1), F.S.
[8] S. 295.21(2), F.S.
[9] Veterans Florida, *Annual Report*, (2021), https://www.veteransflorida.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/2020-21-Annual-Report.pdf (last visited Feb. 9, 2022).
[10] S. 295.21(3), F.S.

trained workers.[11] The purpose of the Program is to meet the workforce demands of businesses in the state by facilitating access to training and education in high-demand fields for veterans.[12]

Functions of the Program include:[13]

- Conducting marketing and recruiting efforts directed at veterans who reside in or who have an interest in relocating to Florida and who are seeking employment;
- Assisting veterans who reside in or relocate to Florida and who are seeking employment;
- Assisting Florida businesses in recruiting and hiring veterans;
- Creating a grant program to provide funding to assist veterans in meeting the workforce-skill needs of businesses seeking to hire, promote, or generally improve specialized skills of veterans, establishing criteria for approval of requests for funding, and maximizing the use of funding for the grant program; and
- Contracting with one or more entities to administer an entrepreneur initiative program for veterans in Florida that connects business leaders with veterans seeking to become entrepreneurs.

SkillBridge Program

In 2021, the Legislature directed Veterans Florida, through the Veterans Employment and Training Services Program, to serve as the state's principal assistance organization under the Department of Defense (DoD) SkillBridge program.[14] The DoD SkillBridge program grants servicemembers[15] an opportunity to "gain valuable civilian work experience through specific industry training, apprenticeships, or internships" by matching civilian opportunities to a servicemember's job training and work experience.[16] The goal of providing these opportunities is to enhance the servicemember's marketability and post-separation career prospects following separation from duty.[17] Any rank, enlisted person, or officer may apply. Military spouses and veterans may also participate on a space available basis; however, the DoD will not provide pay, allowances, benefits, or other program support to the military spouse or veteran.[18]

Under the SkillBridge program, the servicemember is permitted to use up to the last 180 days of service to train and learn with an industry partner that best matches that applicant's job training and work experience. The training must offer the servicemember a high probability of employment. Throughout the SkillBridge program partnership, the servicemember continues to receive military compensation and benefits. Eligibility for the SkillBridge program is mission-dependent and must be authorized by the unit commander prior to entering into any agreement with interested industry employment partners.[19]

Military Health Professions

Army Medic

An Army medic provides emergency medical treatment in both combat and humanitarian situations for the U.S. Army, Army Reserve , or the Army National Guard. Medics serve as first responders, triaging

[11] S. 295.22, F.S.
[12] S. 295.22(2), F.S.
[13] S. 295.22(3), F.S.
[14] Ch. 2021-66, L.O.F.
[15] The term "servicemember" is generally referred to as being on "active duty." 10 USC s. 101 defines "active duty" as full-time duty in the active military service of the United States. The term includes full-time training duty, annual training duty, and attendance, while in the active military service. The term does not include full-time National Guard duty.
[16] Department of Defense SkillBridge, Program Overview, https://dodskillbridge.usalearning.gov/program-overview.htm (last visited Feb. 9, 2022).
[17] Department of Defense SkillBridge, *Military Members,* https://dodskillbridge.usalearning.gov/military-members.htm (last visited Feb. 9, 2022).
[18] Department of Defense SkillBridge, *Frequently Asked Questions,* https://dodskillbridge.usalearning.gov/faq.htm (last visited Feb. 9, 2022).
[19] *Supra,* note 17.

illness and injuries to save lives. An Army medic is considered an entry level position and requires 16 weeks of advanced training after completion of basic training.[20]

Air Force Medical Technician

Air Force medical technicians are enlisted servicemembers who specialize in:[21]

- Aerospace and operational physiology;
- Aerospace medical services;
- Medical laboratory services;
- Medical material (medications and medical supplies);
- Mental health services;
- Dental assistant;
- Respiratory care practitioner;
- Health services management (administration);
- Dental laboratory services;
- Diagnostic imaging;
- Histopathology;
- Diet therapy;
- Optometry services;
- Bioenvironmental engineering;
- Physical medicine;
- Public health;
- Pharmacy technician services; and
- Surgical assistance.

Each specialty requires a high school diploma, General Education Degree (GED), or a GED with 15 college credits, depending on the position sought. Basic understanding of health care and technical training beyond basic training is required for all positions.[22]

Navy Hospital Corpsman

A navy hospital corpsman is an enlisted sailor in the U.S. Navy who assist health care professionals in providing medical care to Navy personnel and their families. A hospital corpsman may function as a clinical or specialty technician, administrative personnel, or a health care provider. Corpsmen may perform emergency medical treatment, serve as an operating room technician, administer immunizations and intravenous fluids., maintain records, and assist Navy physicians and nurses with various tasks.[23]

Hospital corpsmen must hold a high school diploma or equivalent and be a U.S. citizen. After boot camp, hospital corpsmen report for specialized training in one of the following areas:[24]

- **Hospital Corps "A" School:** Nineteen weeks training in basic principles and techniques of patient care and first aid procedures;
- **Field Medical Service School**: Specialized training on medical services relating to Seabees and Marine Corps units, if accepted into such program; or
- **Advanced Training:** Advanced technical training, or "C" school, which is optional training for those who qualify after "A" school, in positions such as:
    - Behavioral health technician;

[20] U.S. Army, *Combat Medic Specialist*, https://www.goarmy.com/careers-and-jobs/career-match/science-medicine/intensive-care/68w-combat-medic-specialist.html (last visited Feb. 9, 2022).
[21] U.S. Air Force, *Air Force Careers – Medical Technicians & Specialists,* https://www.airforce.com/careers/browse-careers?tags=airforce:careers/subcategory/healthcare/medical-technicians-specialists#careers (last visited Feb. 9, 2022).
[22] Id.
[23] America's Navy, *Hospital Corpsman,* https://www.navy.com/careers/hospital-corpsman (last visited Feb. 9, 2022).
[24] Id.

- Dental hygiene;
- Cardiovascular technician;
- Occupational therapy;
- Optician;
- Pharmacy technician;
- Physical therapy technician;
- Respiratory therapist;
- Surgical technologist; and
- X-Ray technician.

U.S. Coast Guard Health Services Technician

U.S. Coast Guard health services technicians (HS technician) provide emergency health care services and daily medical care for Coast Guard Personnel and their families. HS technicians may assist medical and dental officers, perform diagnostic testing, take X-Rays, perform lab testing, prescribe medication, administer immunizations, and perform minor surgical procedures, depending on training and specialization.[25]

HS technicians must undergo 23 weeks of 'A' school, which includes intensive training in:[26]

- Anatomy;
- Physiology;
- Patient examination;
- Evaluation and treatment; and
- Pharmacology.

Effect of the Bill

The bill directs Veterans Florida to assist veterans who have health care services experience in the armed services with accessing training, education, and employment in health professions related to the veteran's service experience.

The bill provides an effective date of July 1, 2022.

B. SECTION DIRECTORY:

Section 1: Amends s. 295.21, F.S., relating to Florida Is For Veterans, Inc.
Section 2: Provides an effective date of July 1, 2022.

[25] U.S. Coast Guard, *Health Services Technician,* https://www.gocoastguard.com/reserve-careers/enlisted-careers/view-job-descriptions/hs (last visited Feb. 9, 2022).
[26] Id.

II. FISCAL ANALYSIS & ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT

A. FISCAL IMPACT ON STATE GOVERNMENT:

1. Revenues:
   None.

2. Expenditures:
   None.

B. FISCAL IMPACT ON LOCAL GOVERNMENTS:

1. Revenues:
   None.

2. Expenditures:
   None.

C. DIRECT ECONOMIC IMPACT ON PRIVATE SECTOR:
   None.

D. FISCAL COMMENTS:
   None.

III. COMMENTS

A. CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES:

1. Applicability of Municipality/County Mandates Provision:
   None. This bill does not appear to affect county of municipal governments.

2. Other:
   None.

B. RULE-MAKING AUTHORITY:
   The bill neither authorizes nor requires rulemaking by executive branch agencies.

C. DRAFTING ISSUES OR OTHER COMMENTS:
   None.

IV. AMENDMENTS/ COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE CHANGES