

117TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

# H. R. 5352

To direct the Secretary of Defense to carry out a pilot program to pre-program suicide prevention resources into smart devices issued to members of the Armed Forces.

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## IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SEPTEMBER 23, 2021

Mr. JOYCE of Ohio (for himself and Mr. PANETTA) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Armed Services

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## A BILL

To direct the Secretary of Defense to carry out a pilot program to pre-program suicide prevention resources into smart devices issued to members of the Armed Forces.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*  
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Military Suicide Pre-  
5 vention in the 21st Century Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress finds the following:

8 (1) Although personal electronic devices, such  
9 as mobile phones, computers, and tablets, increas-

1        ingly are being leveraged as vehicles for health in the  
2        civilian world, almost nothing is known about per-  
3        sonal technology use among members of the Armed  
4        Forces.

5            (2) The Defense Health Agency created the  
6        Virtual Hope Box application to help members of  
7        the Armed Forces build resilience.

8            (3) Users of the Virtual Hope Box application  
9        reported significantly greater ability to cope with un-  
10       pleasant emotions and thoughts.

11           (4) Members of the Armed Forces who are be-  
12       havioral health patients experiencing distress, emo-  
13       tional dysregulation, or suicidal ideation are often  
14       separated from direct clinical support when they  
15       need it.

16           (5) The Virtual Hope Box application offers a  
17       highly portable, accessible, and discreet tool for ef-  
18       fectively increasing coping self-efficacy.

19           (6) A strongly linked chain of care depends on  
20       engaged leaders as well as highly competent first re-  
21       sponders, crisis hotline workers, emergency depart-  
22       ment personnel, chaplains, primary care clinicians,  
23       and behavioral health clinicians.

1 **SEC. 3. PILOT PROGRAM ON PRE-PROGRAMMING OF SUI-**  
2 **CIDE PREVENTION RESOURCES INTO SMART**  
3 **DEVICES ISSUED TO MEMBERS OF THE**  
4 **ARMED FORCES.**

5 (a) IN GENERAL.—Commencing not later than 120  
6 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Sec-  
7 retary of Defense shall carry out a pilot program under  
8 which the Secretary—

9 (1) pre-downloads the Virtual Hope Box appli-  
10 cation of the Defense Health Agency, or such suc-  
11 cessor application, on smart devices individually  
12 issued to members of the Armed Forces;

13 (2) pre-programs the National Suicide Hotline  
14 number and Veterans Crisis Line number into the  
15 contacts for such devices; and

16 (3) provides training, as part of training on sui-  
17 cide awareness and prevention conducted throughout  
18 the Department of Defense, on the preventative re-  
19 sources described in paragraphs (1) and (2).

20 (b) DURATION.—The Secretary shall carry out the  
21 pilot program under this section for a two-year period.

22 (c) SCOPE.—The Secretary shall determine the ap-  
23 propriate scope of individuals participating in the pilot  
24 program under this section to best represent each Armed  
25 Force and to ensure a relevant sample size.

1       (d) IDENTIFICATION OF OTHER RESOURCES.—In  
2 carrying out the pilot program under this section, the Sec-  
3 retary shall coordinate with the Director of the Defense  
4 Health Agency and the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to  
5 identify other useful technology-related resources for use  
6 in the pilot program.

7       (e) REPORT.—Not later than 30 days after com-  
8 pleting the pilot program under this section, the Secretary  
9 shall submit to the Committee on Armed Services of the  
10 Senate and the Committee on Armed Services of the  
11 House of Representatives a report on the pilot program.

12       (f) VETERANS CRISIS LINE DEFINED.—In this sec-  
13 tion, the term “Veterans Crisis Line” means the toll-free  
14 hotline for veterans established under section 1720F(h) of  
15 title 38, United States Code.

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