



HOUSE BILL 370: No Veteran Left Behind.

2021-2022 General Assembly

Committee:	House Homeland Security, Military, and Veterans Affairs. If favorable, re-refer to Appropriations. If favorable, re-refer to Rules, Calendar, and Operations of the House	Date:	April 13, 2021
Introduced by:	Reps. Bell, Moore, Cleveland, Miller	Prepared by:	Billy R. Godwin Staff Attorney
Analysis of:	First Edition		

OVERVIEW: *House Bill 370 would establish a pilot program in six counties to expand the Veterans Justice Intervention Program (VJIP), and appropriate \$500,000 in nonrecurring funds from the General Fund, for the 2021-2022 fiscal year, to The Independence Fund, Inc., a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation, to implement that program.*

BACKGROUND: The Veterans Justice Outreach Program (VJOP) was established in 2009 by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) as a prevention-focused component of the VA's Homeless Programs Office. Veterans Treatment Courts were developed under the VJOP. The VJOP employs specialists at every VA medical center to provide outreach to justice-involved Veterans (JIVs). JIVs are former service members detained by or under the supervision of the criminal justice system. More than one-half of JIVs have either mental health problems such as PTSD, depression, or high anxiety, or have substance abuse disorders.¹

BILL ANALYSIS: House Bill 370 would appropriate, from the General Fund, \$500,00 in nonrecurring funds for the 2021-2022 fiscal year, to The Independence Fund, Inc., a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation, to establish and implement a pilot program to expand the VJIP in the counties of Brunswick, Craven, Cumberland, Onslow, Union, and Wayne. The funds may be used to hire or contract subject matter experts for assessment, coordination, and VJIP implementation in each of the designated counties. In conducting the pilot program, The Independence Fund, Inc., would be required to:

- Partner with other nonprofits, State and local governments, and federal agencies.
- Educate first responders, local community support employees, and others on veteran specific crisis intervention, suicide prevention, and VA resources available.
- Execute training plans based on data collected for each county.
- Monitor the pilot program and maintain regular contact with each county to ensure up to date training and availability and allocation of resources.
- Submit a report, by June 30, 2022, to the Joint Legislative Committees on General Government and Justice and Public Safety and the Fiscal Research Division, on the effectiveness of the pilot program and the feasibility of its expansion throughout the State.

EFFECTIVE DATE: The act would be effective July 1, 2021.

¹ <https://www.research.va.gov/currents/0918-VA-researcher-examines-Vets-who-collide-with-criminal-justice-system.cfm#:~:text=The%20term%20justice%2Dinvolved%20Veterans,incarceration%20in%20jail%20or%20prison.>

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