

By Senator Sharief

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A bill to be entitled

An act relating to suicide prevention for active and former members of the United States Armed Forces, the National Guard, and their reserve components; providing legislative findings and intent; amending s. 394.463, F.S.; requiring a facility conducting an involuntary examination to include in its report to the Baker Act Reporting Center whether the individual examined is an active or former member of the United States Armed Forces, the National Guard, or their reserve components; providing an effective date.

WHEREAS, the Legislature finds the rate of suicide among Florida active duty members and veterans of the United States Armed Forces, the National Guard, and their reserve components remains alarmingly high when compared to that of civilians, and

WHEREAS, according to the Office of Suicide Prevention, there were 34.7 suicides per 100,000 veterans compared to 17.1 per 100,000 nonveterans reported in 2022, and

WHEREAS, current reporting requirements under the Baker Act do not mandate the collection of data on whether individuals subject to involuntary examinations are active duty members or veterans of the United States Armed Forces, the National Guard, or their reserve components, and

WHEREAS, without accurate reporting, the state lacks critical information needed to determine whether the Baker Act is being applied appropriately to active duty members and veterans of the United States Armed Forces, the National Guard, or their reserve components, and

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WHEREAS, the Legislature intends to strengthen oversight and accountability in the application of the Baker Act by requiring mandatory reporting to include identification of a patient's military status to support improved policymaking, prevention strategies, and positive mental health outcomes, NOW, THEREFORE,

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

Section 1. Subsection (6) is added to section 394.463, Florida Statutes, to read:

394.463 Involuntary examination.—

(6) VETERAN AND MILITARY STATUS REPORTING.—Any facility conducting an involuntary examination pursuant to this section must include in its report to the Baker Act Reporting Center at the Louis de la Parte Florida Mental Health Institute whether the individual examined is an active or former member of the United States Armed Forces, the National Guard, or their reserve components.

Section 2. This act shall take effect July 1, 2026.