

**HB197 ENGROSSED**



1 HB197

2 MMQFH HH-2

3 By Representatives Brown, Oliver, Starnes, Jackson, Jones,  
4 Robertson, Sellers, Crawford, Rehm, Wood (R), Smith, Paschal,  
5 Hill, Carns

6 RFD: Military and Veterans Affairs

7 First Read: 20-Feb-24



# HB197 Engrossed

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25  
26  
27  
28

A BILL  
TO BE ENTITLED  
AN ACT

Relating to the Alabama Department of Mental Health; to add Chapter 58 of Title 22, Code of Alabama 1975; to require the Alabama Department of Mental Health to work collaboratively with the Alabama Department of Veterans Affairs to develop a comprehensive plan to address Alabama veterans' behavioral health needs and to provide funding of certain programs addressing specific behavioral health needs.  
BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF ALABAMA:

Section 1. Chapter 58 is added to Title 22, Code of Alabama 1975, to read as follows:

Chapter 58  
§22-58-1

As used in this chapter, the following terms have the following meanings:

- (1) ADMH. The Alabama Department of Mental Health.
- (2) ADMH COMMISSIONER. The Commissioner of the Alabama Department of Mental Health.
- (3) ADVA. The Alabama Department of Veterans Affairs.
- (4) ADVA COMMISSIONER. The Commissioner of the Alabama Department of Veterans Affairs.
- (5) BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CARE. The prevention, diagnosis,



## HB197 Engrossed

29 and treatment of mental health conditions, substance use  
30 disorders, and behavioral health crisis.

31 (6) COMPREHENSIVE PLAN. The comprehensive plan  
32 established pursuant to this chapter, as may be amended from  
33 time to time, to address the behavioral health needs of  
34 veterans as a supplement to services already offered in  
35 Alabama.

36 (7) PTSD. Post traumatic stress disorder.

37 (8) RECOVERY. A process of change through which  
38 individuals improve their health and wellness, live a  
39 self-directed life, and strive to reach their full potential.

40 (9) TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY or TBI. An injury to the  
41 brain caused by a forceful bump, blast, or jolt to the head or  
42 body, or from an object that pierces the skull and enters the  
43 brain, which can be the result of external forces, including,  
44 but not limited to, assault or motor vehicle collisions.

45 (10) VETERAN. Any current resident of the state who:

46 a. Served in the active military, naval, air, or space  
47 forces of the United States who was discharged or released  
48 under conditions other than dishonorable;

49 b. Is or was a member of the Army National Guard or Air  
50 National Guard who was discharged or released from service  
51 under conditions other than dishonorable; or

52 c. Is or was a member of the reserve component of the  
53 Armed Forces who was discharged or released from service under  
54 conditions other than dishonorable.

55 §22-58-2

56 The Legislature finds the following:



## HB197 Engrossed

57 (1) ADMH is the state's lead agency for this act, as  
58 well as the expert in the following areas:

59 a. Knowledge and expertise in behavioral health care  
60 services.

61 b. Certifications and implementation of the Certified  
62 Community Behavioral Health Clinic (CCBHC) model.

63 c. State and national standards of behavioral health  
64 care, treatment, and services.

65 d. Infrastructure and best practices needed to  
66 implement behavioral health care treatment, recovery, and  
67 prevention services.

68 (2) ADVA is the state's expert in the following areas:

69 a. Military experience and culture.

70 b. Relationships and trust with Alabama veterans.

71 c. Knowledge of veterans' state and federal benefits  
72 and resources.

73 d. Types of support needed for veterans to reintegrate  
74 into civilian life.

75 §22-58-3

76 (a) The Veterans Mental Health Steering Committee is  
77 established. The purpose of the committee is to develop a  
78 comprehensive plan to address the behavioral health needs of  
79 Alabama veterans.

80 (b) The committee shall include the following  
81 individuals:

82 (1) The ADMH Commissioner, or his or her designee. The  
83 ADMH Commissioner shall chair of the committee.

84 (2) The ADVA Commissioner, or his or her designee. The



## HB197 Engrossed

85 ADVA Commissioner shall vice-chair the committee.

86 (3) The Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services  
87 Commissioner, or his or her designee.

88 (4) The Adjutant General of the Alabama National Guard,  
89 or his or her designee.

90 (5) During their tenure as legislators, the lead  
91 sponsor for House Bill 197 and the lead sponsor for Senate  
92 Bill 135 from the 2024 Regular Legislative Session, who, upon  
93 leaving the Legislature, shall be replaced by the respective  
94 chairs of the Senate and House Veterans and Military Affairs  
95 Committees, or their designees.

96 (6) Representatives of two veterans service  
97 organizations with expertise in mental health, substance use,  
98 peer support, and other culturally competent care, appointed  
99 by the ADVA Commissioner, who shall serve for initial terms of  
100 one year and three years, respectively.

101 (7) Representatives of one other veterans support  
102 organization, appointed by the ADVA Commissioner, who shall  
103 serve for an initial term of four years, respectively.

104 (8) Three mental health and substance use providers  
105 certified by ADMH who also serve veterans, appointed by the  
106 ADMH Commissioner, who shall serve for initial terms of one,  
107 two, and three years, respectively.

108 (9) The Associate Commissioner of the ADMH Division of  
109 Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services shall serve as an  
110 ex-officio, non-voting member of the committee.

111 (10) The Veterans Well-Being Program Manager of the  
112 ADVA shall serve as an ex-officio, non-voting member of the



## HB197 Engrossed

113 committee.

114 (11) The Governor or his or her designee.

115 (12) The Lieutenant Governor or his or her designee.

116 (13) The Speaker of the Alabama House of  
117 Representatives or his or her designee.

118 (14) The President Pro Tempore of the Senate, or his or  
119 her designee.

120 (15) The minority leaders of the House of  
121 Representatives and the Senate, or their designees.

122 (c) All appointing authorities shall coordinate their  
123 appointments so that diversity of gender, race, and  
124 geographical areas are reflective of the makeup of this state.  
125 To the extent practicable, appointing authorities are  
126 encouraged to prioritize appointments of service members,  
127 veterans, and family members of veterans. The designee of a  
128 committee member shall not be a health care provider or mental  
129 health care provider.

130 (d) Meetings of the committee shall be held no less  
131 than on a quarterly basis, or upon the call of the chair or a  
132 majority of committee members. Appointments to the committee  
133 shall be made by July 1, 2024, and the first meeting of the  
134 committee shall be held by September 1, 2024. All meetings  
135 shall comply with the Open Meetings Act.

136 §22-58-4

137 (a) ADMH shall work collaboratively with ADVA,  
138 leveraging each other's roles, relationships, and expertise.  
139 The committee shall develop a comprehensive plan in response  
140 to a review of the following:



## HB197 Engrossed

141 (1) The current state of Alabama veterans' mental  
142 health and rates of substance use.

143 (2) Mental health, substance use, recovery, and other  
144 veteran support services in Alabama.

145 (3) Needs assessments previously conducted for the  
146 purpose of identifying gaps in services and support. The  
147 review of needs assessments shall include qualitative and  
148 quantitative feedback of post-9/11 veterans in Alabama, as  
149 well as the need for additional services and coordination of  
150 existing services.

151 (b) The review shall be completed by January 1, 2025.

152 (c) The committee shall consult with others, to include  
153 the United States Department of Veterans Affairs and the  
154 Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, as  
155 appropriate, during the development of the comprehensive plan.

156 (d) ADMH shall align the comprehensive plan with state  
157 and national behavioral health standards.

158 §22-58-5

159 (a) ADMH may establish pilot projects utilizing  
160 existing evidence-based services certified by ADMH or  
161 organizations which agree to become certified by ADMH. Pilot  
162 projects shall be awarded funding by ADMH through a fair and  
163 transparent request for proposal process. Pilot projects may  
164 begin upon the appropriation of funds and certification of  
165 projects.

166 (b) The pilot projects may include any of the  
167 following:

168 (1) Eye movement desensitization and reprocessing



## HB197 Engrossed

169 therapy as an evidence-based treatment for PTSD.

170 (2) TBI screenings integrated into behavioral health  
171 services.

172 (3) Integrated behavioral health and primary care  
173 models.

174 (4) Agencies that have successfully met the SAMHSA  
175 criteria for the CCBHC model of care as certified by ADMH.

176 (c) Pilot projects shall be based on the findings of  
177 the comprehensive plan.

178 §22-58-6

179 ADMH and ADVA shall present the proposed comprehensive  
180 plan to the respective Veterans and Military Affairs  
181 Committees of the Alabama House of Representatives and the  
182 Alabama Senate for their review and input no later than April  
183 1, 2025. ADMH shall then submit the proposed comprehensive  
184 plan to the Governor by June 30, 2025, for review and  
185 approval. The Governor shall act on the comprehensive plan no  
186 later than August 31, 2025.

187 §22-58-7

188 (a) Upon approval of the Governor and subject to  
189 sufficient appropriations, ADMH shall implement the  
190 comprehensive plan with continued input from ADVA.

191 (b) ADMH shall contract with multiple entities to  
192 implement pilot projects as described in Section 22-58-4 and  
193 provide services under this chapter. Contracts for the  
194 procurement of services shall be awarded on a competitive  
195 basis through a request for proposal process. Both ADMH and  
196 ADVA shall work collaboratively in the review and selection of





## HB197 Engrossed

197 the proposals in a fair and transparent manner.

198 (c) ADMH and ADVA shall comply with federal ethics laws  
199 in regard to its role in this chapter.

200 (d) Implementation of this chapter shall be contingent  
201 upon new funds appropriated by the Legislature. Nothing in this  
202 act shall require existing resources to be diverted for this  
203 purpose.

204 (e) All pilot projects and services implemented under  
205 this act shall comply with all requirements, including data  
206 reporting and certification standards, set out by ADMH. If a  
207 recipient of funds fails to meet those requirements, ADMH may  
208 demand recovery of the full amount of funds awarded. Upon  
209 notification of any demand, ADMH shall also notify the  
210 committee outlining the rationale for taking that action.

211 (f) During the committee's regular meetings, ADMH shall  
212 update the committee on the progress of the comprehensive  
213 plan's implementation.

214 (g) The committee shall conduct an annual review and may  
215 make formal recommendations regarding the comprehensive plan.  
216 ADMH shall align these recommendations to state and national  
217 behavioral health standards and submit them to the Governor for  
218 approval.

219 (h) To inform this annual review, ADMH shall report  
220 annually to the committee the approximate number of veterans  
221 served through the pilot projects, the services provided by  
222 pilot projects, and the amount of funding expended for this  
223 purpose, as well as other available datapoints as determined by  
224 the committee.



## HB197 Engrossed

225 (i) Nothing in this act shall supersede or diminish the  
226 existing powers enumerated to ADMH.

227 Section 2. This act shall become effective June 1,  
228 2024.



**HB197 Engrossed**

229  
230  
231  
  
232  
233  
234  
235  
236  
237  
238  
239  
240  
241  
242  
243  
244  
245  
246  
247  
248  
249  
250

House of Representatives

Read for the first time and referred .....20-Feb-24  
to the House of Representatives  
committee on Military and Veterans  
Affairs  
  
Read for the second time and placed .....21-Mar-24  
on the calendar:  
0 amendments  
  
Read for the third time and passed .....30-Apr-24  
as amended  
Yeas 103  
Nays 0  
Abstains 0

John Treadwell  
Clerk