

# HB197 INTRODUCED



1 HB197  
2 QPGN151-1  
3 By Representatives Brown, Oliver, Starnes, Jackson, Jones,  
4 Rogers, Robertson, Sellers, Crawford, Rehm, Wood (R), Smith,  
5 Paschal, Hill, Carns  
6 RFD: Military and Veterans Affairs  
7 First Read: 20-Feb-24



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SYNOPSIS:

This bill would authorize the Alabama Department of Veterans Affairs to establish and operate a statewide integrated health care system dedicated to Alabama veterans and their immediate family members, consisting of comprehensive in-patient facilities and outpatient clinics to address the health care needs affecting Alabama veterans.

A BILL  
TO BE ENTITLED  
AN ACT

Relating to the Department of Veterans Affairs; to add Chapter 5B to Title 31, Code of Alabama 1975, to authorize the Department of Veterans Affairs to establish and operate a statewide integrated health care system dedicated to Alabama veterans and their immediate families.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF ALABAMA:

Section 1. Chapter 5B is added to Title 31, Code of Alabama 1975, to read as follows:

§31-5B-1

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



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29 (1) BOARD. The State Board of Veterans Affairs.

30 (2) COMMISSIONER. The Chief Executive Officer of the  
31 State Department of Veterans Affairs.

32 (3) DEPARTMENT. The Alabama Department of Veterans  
33 Affairs.

34 (4) PLAN. The comprehensive plan, as may be amended  
35 from time to time, of the Alabama Department of Veterans  
36 Affairs to establish and operate a statewide integrated health  
37 care system dedicated to Alabama veterans and their immediate  
38 families to deliver primary care, behavioral health care, and  
39 social services.

40 (5) VETERAN.

41 a. Any individual who served in the active military,  
42 naval, air, or space forces of the United States who was  
43 discharged or released under conditions other than  
44 dishonorable.

45 b. Any individual who is entitled, under Title 10  
46 U.S.C. Chapter 1223, to retired pay for nonregular service or,  
47 but for age, would be entitled under that chapter to retired  
48 pay for nonregular service.

49 §31-5B-2

50 The department, acting through its board and its  
51 commissioner, shall establish an integrated health care system  
52 dedicated to Alabama veterans and their immediate families to  
53 provide coordination of care in primary care, behavioral  
54 health care, and social services.

55 (1) The department shall create and implement a  
56 comprehensive plan to deliver primary care, behavioral health



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57 care, and social services to veterans statewide and to  
58 establish programs and priorities for organizational and  
59 administrative purposes in accordance with the plan.

60 (2) The department shall establish, supervise, and  
61 coordinate standards for all operations and activities  
62 necessary or required to develop and deliver integrated  
63 primary care, behavioral health care, and social services to  
64 veterans in accordance with the plan and may do all of the  
65 following:

66 a. Adopt rules and policies to carry out its duties in  
67 accordance with the plan.

68 b. Receive and administer any funds available from any  
69 federal, state, or private source for the purpose of  
70 delivering services to veterans in accordance with the plan.

71 c. Acquire, receive, take title to, purchase, gift,  
72 lease, devise or otherwise, to hold, keep, and develop, and to  
73 transfer, convey, lease, assign, or otherwise dispose of  
74 property of every kind and character, and any and every  
75 interest therein, to or from any individual or organization.

76 d. Undertake and to make or cause to be made, either  
77 singly or in conjunction or cooperation with others,  
78 appropriate studies, surveys, arrangements, undertakings, and  
79 construction designs and plans, and supervision relating to,  
80 directly or indirectly, the restoration, renovation,  
81 improvement, or maintenance of any property for the purpose of  
82 implementing any portion of the plan.

83 e. Make, enter into, and execute contracts, agreements,  
84 leases, and other legal arrangements, and to take any other



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85 steps and actions as may be necessary or appropriate to  
86 implement any portion of the plan.

87 f. Borrow money for any purpose necessary or  
88 appropriate to implement the plan.

89 g. Invest any of its funds not presently necessary for  
90 operations in bonds, bills, or notes of the United States,  
91 bonds of the state, and interest-bearing deposits in banks and  
92 savings and loan institutions.

93 h. Provide for any insurance required or advisable in  
94 the discretion of the board.

95 i. Establish and maintain reasonable minimum policies  
96 and standards for the employment of professional and  
97 administrative staff and the admission, diagnosis, care, and  
98 treatment of patients in facilities operated in accordance  
99 with the plan.

100 j. Establish and maintain reasonable minimum standards  
101 for the maintenance and preservation of patient records,  
102 including minimum standards for maintaining patient  
103 confidentiality, in facilities operated in accordance with the  
104 plan.

105 k. Enter into contracts with any person, state or  
106 federal agency, or organization capable of contracting for  
107 equipment, goods, and services necessary to carry out the  
108 terms of the plan.

109 l. Cooperate with the United States and any federal  
110 agency, including the United States Department of Veterans  
111 Affairs, and the State of Alabama, and any county or  
112 municipality of the state, to make and enter into contracts



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113 and all manner of legal arrangements to obtain money by way of  
114 loans, grants, or payments, or property, or other forms of  
115 assistance as the board may deem advisable in its discretion  
116 to implement the terms of the plan.

117 m. Carry out all of its functions, exercise all of its  
118 powers, and conduct all of its business and affairs without  
119 regard to Sections 41-16-50 through 41-16-63, or any similar  
120 law pertaining to competitive bidding, which might otherwise  
121 be applicable.

122 n. Create and appoint members of advisory committees as  
123 needed from those leaders in primary care, behavioral health  
124 care, social services, and from the public generally,  
125 including veterans, to advise the department in regard to  
126 plans, programs, and rules pertaining to the plan and its  
127 implementation. The members of advisory committees shall be  
128 entitled to be reimbursed for mileage expenses, not to exceed  
129 the amount prescribed by state law.

130 Section 2. This act shall become effective on October  
131 1, 2024.