

118TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

# H. R. 3009

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

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## IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

APRIL 28, 2023

Mr. JOYCE of Ohio (for himself, Mr. PANETTA, Mr. FITZPATRICK, and Ms. NORTON) 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 certain 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:

1           (1) Although electronic devices, such as mobile  
2 phones, computers, and tablets, increasingly are  
3 being leveraged as vehicles for health in the civilian  
4 world, almost nothing is known about how covered  
5 devices may be used among members of the Armed  
6 Forces to positively impact the health of such mem-  
7 bers.

8           (2) The Defense Health Agency created the  
9 Virtual Hope Box application to help members of  
10 the Armed Forces build resilience.

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

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

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

22           (6) A strongly linked chain of care depends on  
23 engaged leaders as well as highly competent first re-  
24 sponders, crisis hotline workers, emergency depart-

1 ment personnel, chaplains, primary care clinicians,  
2 and behavioral health clinicians.

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

7 (a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 120 days after the  
8 date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Defense  
9 shall commence the conduct of a pilot program under  
10 which the Secretary—

11 (1) pre-downloads the Virtual Hope Box appli-  
12 cation of the Defense Health Agency, or such suc-  
13 cessor application, on the covered devices of mem-  
14 bers of the Armed Forces;

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

18 (3) provides training, as part of the training on  
19 suicide awareness and prevention conducted  
20 throughout the Department of Defense, on the pre-  
21 ventative resources described in paragraphs (1) and  
22 (2).

23 (b) DURATION.—The Secretary of Defense shall  
24 carry out the pilot program under this section for a two-  
25 year period.

1           (c) SCOPE.—The Secretary of Defense shall deter-  
2 mine the appropriate scope of individuals participating in  
3 the pilot program under this section to best represent each  
4 Armed Force and to ensure a relevant sample size.

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

11          (e) REPORT.—Not later than 30 days after the date  
12 on which the pilot program under this section terminates,  
13 the Secretary of Defense shall submit to the Committees  
14 on Armed Services of the House of Representatives and  
15 the Senate a report on the pilot program, including rec-  
16 ommendations by the Secretary relating to expanding the  
17 scope of future pilot programs to include members of the  
18 Armed Forces who do not possess covered devices.

19          (f) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

20               (1) The term “covered device” means a smart  
21 device (including a mobile phone) that is issued to  
22 an individual by the Secretary of Defense or the Sec-  
23 retary of an Armed Force.

1           (2) The term “Veterans Crisis Line” means the  
2 toll-free hotline for veterans established under sec-  
3 tion 1720F(h) of title 38, United States Code.

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