

**For Immediate Release**

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**State of Illinois Joins Multi-State Effort to Lower Suicide Rates Among Veterans Through Mental Health Offerings and Preventative Services**

*State announces \$2M in funding for Suicide Prevention as part of National Governor's Challenge to Prevent Suicide*

CHICAGO – Governor JB Pritzker and the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) announced today that the State of Illinois will join the Governor's Challenge to Prevent Suicide, a national effort that champions mental health support and preventative services for Veterans. The State is dedicating \$2 million to the initiative, in partnership with the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and the Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs (IDVA). In 2019, suicide was the 12th leading cause of death among Illinois residents of all ages, but 3rd leading cause of death among those aged 1-24 years.

"Our Veterans are heroes who served us bravely and deserve quality care here at home, including robust mental health services," **said Governor JB Pritzker**. "I am pleased to announce that Illinois is putting \$2 million towards suicide prevention, funding that will allow the State to provide critical care and preventative services to our heroes in their darkest hour."

Illinois is the latest of 27 states to join the challenge. The State continues to prioritize mental health and preventative services and will work to implement best practices using the latest public health research and data.

"With Governor Pritzker's strong leadership, this funding is an opportunity to increase resources for suicide prevention targeted at those most impacted by mental illness with a particular focus on communities of color and the military community," **said IDHS Secretary Grace Hou**. "There is a tremendous opportunity to aggressively prevent suicide and save lives."

**IDVA Director Linda Chapa LaVia said**, "We must do everything within our power as policymakers to fight for the lives of our nation's heroes just as they have fought for us. I

applaud Governor Pritzker for rising to the challenge to work towards stamping out Veteran suicide once and for all. Veterans and active-duty service members are at an even more increased risk of taking their own lives during this isolating time in our state's history. This funding to put concrete plans into action could not come at a better time."

"The Illinois Governor's Challenge Team is excited to be in partnership with the SAMHSA to bring an innovative strategic action plan to prevent suicide among Service Members, Veterans, and their families to the citizens of Illinois by using a public health approach. It is the desired goal of the Illinois Governor's Challenge Team to prevent all suicides in the State of Illinois," **said Dr. Teresa Glaze**, Statewide Chief of Social Work, IDHS/Division of Mental Health.

"As a Veteran of the US Marines, and Chair of Veterans Affairs in the IL House of Representatives, I am honored to be part of the Governor's Challenge Team. It takes a group effort to come together along with the SAMHSA to address the needs of Service members, Veterans and their families to prevent Veteran suicide," **said State Representative Stephanie Kifowit MPA**. "By having such a talented and diverse team, I am motivated by the innovative and comprehensive plan created by the Governor's Challenge Team to provide the support needed for our military community and stem the tide of Veteran suicide."

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