Committee on Veterans

Bianca Vitale, *Legislative Counsel*

Elizabeth Arzt, *Policy Analyst*

Sebastian Bacchi, *Senior Financial Analyst*



**THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

**COMMITTEE REPORT OF THE HUMAN SERVICES DIVISION**

**Jeffrey Baker, Legislative Director**

**Andrea Vazquez, Deputy Director, Human Services**

**COMMITTEE ON VETERANS**

**Hon. Eric Dinowitz, Chair**

**September 9, 2021**

**PROPOSED INTRODUCTION NO. 647-A:** By Council Members Eugene and Yeger

**TITLE:** A Local Law to amend the administrative code of the city of New York, in relation to peer support services for veterans

**ADMINISTRATIVE CODE:** Adds a new section 31-111.

1. **Introduction**

 On September 9, 2021, the Committee on Veterans, chaired by Council Member Dinowitz, will hold a hearing on Proposed Int. 647-A, a local law in relation to peer support services for veterans, sponsored by Council Member Eugene. This legislation was previously heard at a hearing of this committee on June 19, 2018, at which the committee received testimony from representatives from the New York City Department of Veterans’ Services (DVS) and veterans’ advocates and service providers.

1. **BACKGROUND**

***Veterans’ Needs***

Approximately 18 million veterans live in the United States.[[1]](#footnote-1) Veterans are demographically diverse by age, family structure, education, and income and display a variety of needs that cannot fully be addressed by a one-size-fits-all strategy.[[2]](#footnote-2) The most commonly identified veterans’ needs include support services that address mental health needs, physical health needs, employment and housing.[[3]](#footnote-3) Barriers that decrease veterans’ access to support services include a lack of awareness about existing benefits and services, excessive paperwork, a perceived low quality of services and stigmatization.[[4]](#footnote-4) The bill presented at this hearing seeks to alleviate some of these challenges by offering additional peer support services and resources to New York City veterans.

1. **Bill Analysis**

**Proposed Int. 647-A** - A Local Law to amend the administrative code of the city of New York, in relation to peer support services for veterans

This bill would require the Department of Veterans’ Services (DVS), in partnership with local veteran service organizations, to establish a telephone hotline to provide peer support services and information to veterans. The bill requires the hotline be staffed by certified veteran peer specialists. The veteran peer specialists will provide counseling and referral services for callers. DVS would be required to post the peer support hotline telephone number and the hours of operation on its website.

Proposed Int. No. 647-A

By Council Members Eugene and Yeger ..Title

A LOCAL LAW

To amend the administrative code of the city of New York, in relation to peer support services for veterans

.

Be it enacted by the Council as follows:

Section 1. Title 31 of the administrative code of the city of New York is amended by adding a new section 31-111 to read as follows:

§ 31-111 Peer support services. a. Definitions. For purposes of this section, the term “veteran peer specialist” shall mean an individual who is a veteran and is certified as a peer specialist in New York State.

b. The department shall coordinate with veteran service organizations for the purpose of establishing a hotline to provide peer support services and information to veterans. Such hotline shall be staffed by veteran peer specialists and shall provide counseling and referral services for callers.

c. The department shall post on its website the peer support hotline telephone number, telephone operating hours and any additional information deemed by the department to be relevant.

§ 2. This local law takes effect 180 days after it becomes law.

BBB/KET / BM/BV

Int. 324-2014 / LS 1392 / Int. 503-2011/Int. 0647-2018

LS # 699

9/1/21 6:20 PM

1. Jonathan E. Vespa, *American Community Survey Report*, (June 2020), *available at* <https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2020/demo/acs-43.pdf>. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Clearinghouse for Military Family Readiness at Penn State, *Supporting United States Veterans: A Comprehensive Recent Review of Veteran-Focused Needs Assessment*, p. 5 (Oct. 16, 2017), *available at* <https://militaryfamilies.psu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Veterans_Assessment.pdf>. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. *Id*. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. *Id*. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)