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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Rep. Bruck testifies in support of plan to improve mental health services for Michigan veterans

State Rep. Will Bruck this week offered [moving testimony](#) in support of a plan he is sponsoring to help improve access to mental health services for veterans throughout Michigan.

Bruck, a retired Army veteran, understands the toll that Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, anxiety, depression, and other mental health challenges take on service members, veterans and their families.

“In the military there are lots of screenings that are done when you’re coming off of a deployment, but at that point your only goal is to get home,” said Bruck, R-Erie. “I remember sitting at Fort Leonard Wood in 2004, after spending a year and a half in Iraq, and going through the demobilization process. Essentially, if you respond ‘yes’ to anything you’re staying there longer, so I said ‘no’ to everything because my goal was to get home.

“We seek to provide the opportunity for veterans to be made aware of resources after the dust of returning home has settled down.

“I was not acting normally or rationally once I got home, and I had no idea what was going on with me. I was a totally different person before I deployed, and I came home agitated and unruly. It would have been nice to have something when I came home, after I got back to life.”

House Bills 5276-5280 would:

- Establish the Office of Mental Health and Suicide Prevention within the Michigan Veterans Affairs Agency. It also ensures the collection of data surrounding mental health and substance abuse issues.
- Establish a statewide outreach program on mental health and substance abuse for service members and veterans. The program would also provide resources and support for family

members of service members and veterans navigating mental health and substance abuse issues.

- Establish a county veteran service officer training program within the Michigan Veterans Affairs Agency. This optional program will allow county veteran service officers to receive training and be able to administer a basic mental health and substance abuse screening to veterans.
- Place the [Buddy to Buddy Volunteer Mentorship Program](#) within state law. This will offer stability for the program, which offers one-on-one, veteran-to-veteran mentorship.
- Create a transition program for all Army and Air National Guard members in the state. Sponsored by Bruck and modeled after many of the same courses that are required for service members leaving the armed forces, this program will focus solely on mental health and wellbeing, navigating the military to civilian transition, and exploring ways to find purpose after service.

“What my bill does is set up a system that bridges the divide between military and civilian life,” Bruck said. “It gives a military person the opportunity to find purpose in life again through a valuable screening and the surrounding support services.”

House Bills 5276-5280 remain under consideration by the House Military, Veterans and Homeland Security Committee.

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PHOTO INFORMATION: State Rep. Will Bruck discusses the need for additional mental health services in Michigan.

VIDEO AVAILABLE: <https://youtu.be/YgonnUabFRM>



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