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Senator Theresa Gerratana
Connecticut

Representative Kevin Ryan
Deputy Speaker
Connecticut

Director
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RESOLUTION, # MV-2017-01

RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF A VETERANS MENTAL HEALTH
INVESTIGATION AND CREATION OF A VETERANS COURT IN PUERTO
RICO

Whereas, the men and women of Puerto Rico and the U.S Virgin Islands have served honorably in the United States armed forces for more than 118 years, beginning in 1899, following the Spanish American War and subsequent occupation of the island, and

Whereas, the men and women of Puerto Rico upon returning home are suffering with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), Military Sexual Trauma (MST), and other mental health issues related to their military service, and

Whereas, there is an uncertain number of registered veterans living in Puerto Rico and the U.S Virgin Islands with many more unaccounted for, and

Whereas, the number of veterans diagnosed and undiagnosed with mental health disorders and cognitive impairments persist, and

Whereas, an alarming number of these veterans are appearing in the courts to face charges that might be in connection to PTSD, TBI, MST and other related issues, and

Whereas, the Department of Veterans Affairs does not provide accurate precise numbers of the veterans population of Puerto Rico and the U.S Virgin Islands, and

Whereas, Veterans courts are deemed a necessary solution-based approach to the increased misuse of drugs and trauma based incidents which occurred during military service, and

Whereas, the Senate of Puerto Rico is presently investigating the status of the mental health situation and services provided to Veterans and the adequacy of establishing specialized Veteran's Courts in the Island.

Therefore Be It Resolved, That the Council of State Governments Eastern Regional Conference Military & Veterans Affairs Committee recommends the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs along with the U.S. Census Bureau conduct an American Fact Finder survey to determine the exact number of veterans residing in Puerto Rico and the U.S Virgin Islands, and

Be It Further Resolved that The Council of State Governments Eastern Regional Conference Military & Veterans Affairs Committee recommends the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs conduct, in coordination with the Puerto Rico and the U.S Virgin Islands' Senate, a thorough investigation regarding the mental health services for Veterans in Puerto Rico and the U.S Virgin Islands, emphasizing the allocation of resources in order to comply with the demand of Veterans in need of mental health treatment; and

Be It Further Resolved that the Council of State Governments Eastern Regional Conference Military & Veterans Affairs Committee recommends the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs conduct, in coordination with the Puerto Rico and the U.S Virgin Islands' Senate, a thorough investigation regarding the difference in services and treatment that Veterans receive in Puerto Rico, in comparison with the services and treatment that veterans receive in the 50 states; and

Be It Further Resolved that the Council of State Governments Eastern Regional Conference Military & Veterans Affairs Committee request, based on the results of the before mentioned investigations, the U.S. Congress to identify and allocate the funding and resources required; and

Be It Further Resolved that a copy of this resolution be sent to the President of the United States, the Majority and Minority Leaders of the U.S. Senate, the Speaker and Minority Leaders of the U.S. House of Representatives, the Puerto Rico Representative in Congress, the U.S Virgin Islands Representative in Congress, the Secretary of U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, the Chair of the U.S. Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs, the Chair of the House Committee on Veterans Affairs, the Governor of Puerto Rico, the Governor of the U.S Virgin Islands, the Majority and Minority Leaders in the Puerto Rico Senate, the Majority and Minority Leaders in the Puerto Rico House of Representatives, the Majority and Minority Leaders in the U.S Virgin Islands Senate, the Chairs of the Veterans Affairs committee of the Legislative Assembly of Puerto Rico, the Chairs of the Veterans Affairs committee of the U.S Virgin Islands and the Veterans Advocate Office of Puerto Rico.

Adopted August 16, at the CSG/ERC Annual Meeting and Policy Forum Uncasville, Connecticut