

H.R. 5029, Expanding the Families of Veterans Access to Mental Health Services Act

As ordered reported by the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs on November 4, 2021

By Fiscal Year, Millions of Dollars	2022	2022-2026	2022-2031
Direct Spending (Outlays)	0	0	0
Revenues	0	0	0
Increase or Decrease (-) in the Deficit	0	0	0
Spending Subject to Appropriation (Outlays)	3	27	not estimated
Statutory pay-as-you-go procedures apply?	No	Mandate Effects	
Increases on-budget deficits in any of the four consecutive 10-year periods beginning in 2032?	No	Contains intergovernmental mandate?	No
		Contains private-sector mandate?	No

Under current law, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) provides bereavement counseling to family members when an active-duty service member's death is determined to have occurred in the line of duty. H.R. 5029 would require VA to provide counseling to families of veterans or service members who die by suicide, and the bill would apply to deaths that occur before, on, or after the date of enactment. Suicides by service members are generally considered to occur in the line of duty; therefore, most survivors of service members are eligible under current law.

Using data from VA, CBO estimates that under H.R. 5029, roughly 3,000 of the 6,000 families of veterans that would be newly eligible each year would use counseling services. CBO expects that, on average, each family would attend 12 counseling sessions, at a cost of about \$190 per session. CBO assumes that the bill will be enacted in the middle of fiscal year 2022 and expects that the families of some veterans who died in 2021 would seek counseling in 2022 and 2023. After adjusting for inflation, CBO estimates that meeting the bill's requirements would cost \$29 million over the 2022-2026 period. Such spending would be subject to the availability of appropriated funds.



The costs of the legislation, detailed in Table 1, fall within budget function 700 (veterans benefits and services).

Table 1.
Estimated Increases in Spending Subject to Appropriation Under H.R. 5029

	By Fiscal Year, Millions of Dollars					2022-2026
	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	
Bereavement Counseling						
Estimated Authorization	7	6	6	6	6	31
Estimated Outlays	3	6	6	6	6	27

The CBO staff contact for this estimate is Etaf Khan. The estimate was reviewed by Leo Lex, Deputy Director of Budget Analysis.