

Submitter: Rebecca Wallis

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Veterans, Emergency Management, Federal and World Affairs

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB4099

To the Members of the Committee on Veterans and Emergency Management:

My name is Rebecca Wallis, a veteran of the United States Marine Corps, residing in Newberg, Oregon. I served honorably and now advocate for my fellow veterans facing the unique challenges of reintegration into civilian life. I am writing to express my strong opposition to House Bill 4099, which establishes the Task Force on Responding to Veterans in Crisis. While I appreciate the intent to improve support for veterans in crisis, this bill introduces mechanisms that could inadvertently or in worst cases, deliberately harm the very individuals it aims to help by eroding privacy, autonomy, and civil liberties.

As a veteran, I know firsthand the stigma surrounding mental health issues like PTSD. The proposal for a government-issued "crisis" identification card and flagging veterans in the Law Enforcement Data System (LEDS) raises serious red flags. These tools could be misused to profile and surveil veterans based on vague or unsubstantiated criteria, leading to discrimination in employment, housing, or even routine law enforcement interactions. Historical precedents, such as the overreach in red flag laws or mental health databases, show how well-intentioned systems can devolve into tools for control, stripping individuals of due process and Second Amendment rights without evidence of imminent harm.

Furthermore, empowering law enforcement to "transfer" veterans to crisis teams without clear, veteran-centered safeguards could result in involuntary detentions or forced interventions. In rural areas like Yamhill County, where resources are limited, this might exacerbate isolation rather than provide help, pushing veterans away from seeking support due to fear of coercion. The task force's composition, heavily weighted toward law enforcement and government agencies, lacks sufficient veteran representation to ensure balanced recommendations.

I urge the committee to reject HB 4099 or, at minimum, amend it to include mandatory consent for IDs and flags, independent oversight, robust privacy protections, and appeals processes. Veterans deserve genuine, voluntary support not systems that risk turning us into suspects in our own communities.

Thank you for considering my testimony.

Sincerely,

Rebecca Wallis
Veteran, USMC
Newberg, OR