



TINA KOTEK
GOVERNOR

March 5, 2026

The Honorable Julie Fahey
Speaker of the House
H-271 State Capitol
Salem, OR 97301

The Honorable Rob Wagner
President of the Senate
S-201 State Capitol
Salem, OR 97301

RE: House Bill 4099

Dear Speaker Fahey and President Wagner,

Today, I am signing House Bill 4099, which creates the Task Force on Responding to Veterans in Crisis (Task Force) and directs the group to create recommendations for each county in Oregon to establish a veteran crisis response team. I write this letter to affirm my support to evolve programs that help veterans in crisis and appreciate the legislature elevating this topic with the passage of House Bill 4099. I am also writing to share my implementation direction as the Task Force works to achieve the spirit of the law.

Oregon's service members make tremendous sacrifices for our state and our country, and we have the responsibility to support them when they return home. I have made improving behavioral health treatment in Oregon a top priority, and that means meeting the needs of veterans who call Oregon home. Crisis workers already carry out some of the hardest and most essential work in our behavioral health system. We agree with this legislation which seeks to strengthen the crisis system we have and build a more robust response for veterans within it.

House Bill 4099 takes effect on the 91st day after sine die, or roughly June 8, 2026, with a requirement that the Task Force submit a report to the Legislature no later than September 15, 2026. The report must include all the identified items in Section 3 of the bill, including developing plans for each county to have a veteran crisis response team, identifying necessary changes in existing law, and providing best practices for training standards and certification. Given that three months is insufficient time to provide a full report with legislative recommendations and testimony acknowledged that the 2026 report may be a preliminary, I will expect the Task Force to offer a preliminary report to the legislature in the fall of 2026, while utilizing the full time allotted by the legislature to produce a final report to the Legislature by December 2027.

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Secondly, the bill requires the Task Force to develop a proposal for Oregon's 36 counties to build a properly trained veteran crisis response team, as well as addressing interactions and interventions by law enforcement. In making such recommendations, I believe it is important to have subject matter experts in trauma-informed and evidence-based best practices for responding to veterans in crisis included, as well as extensive research of federal law and state criminal and civil law. To this end, I am directing the Oregon State Police, the Oregon Department of Veterans Affairs, and the Oregon Health Authority to coordinate their assistance to the Task Force to identify the necessary expertise to support this work and build on the work of other boards or research already available. I will be requesting the assistance of counties to support the Task Force to understand what types of organizational structure and funding mechanism would be needed to create a veteran crisis response team.

Lastly, the bill does not provide guidance or additional protections on the requirement to create a path to flag a veteran potentially in crisis in the Law Enforcement Data System (LEDS). I have heard the privacy and discrimination concerns addressed during the legislative process and expect this issue will be taken up by the work group. Using existing technology such as LEDS to identify veterans experiencing a behavioral health crisis could create unintended consequences such as employment and licensing challenges, and I look forward to the recommended actions from the workgroup that will help mitigate these factors

Thank you for your leadership in elevating this critical topic and in advance for your participation through assignment of legislators to the Task Force.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Tina Kotek", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Governor Tina Kotek