

The Brandon Act



The Brandon Act, named in honor of Brandon Caserta, would require the Department of Defense to establish a standard phrase that service members may use to initiate a mandatory and immediate mental health evaluation referral. The bill honors the memory of Petty Officer Third Class Brandon Caserta, who died by suicide on June 25, 2018 on his Navy Helicopter Squadron's flight line in Norfolk, VA.

Petty Officer Brandon Caserta was 21 years old when he died from suicide after a period of sustained bullying and hazing that he endured from some of his fellow sailors. He tried to find help to escape that impossible situation, but was unable to get the treatment he wanted. Had he not encountered multiple barriers to accessing mental health services—including the stigma of self reporting—he would likely be here today.

The Brandon Act would require that a servicemember who discloses they want to see mental health assistance use a standard phrase, like "Brandon Act," that would trigger a confidential mental health evaluation referral that would not require a notification to the command. The Brandon Act does this by amending 10 U.S.C. 1090a, existing law that regulates commanding officer and supervisor referrals of members for mental health evaluations.

The Brandon Act requires that the Department of Defense establish a disclosure and referral process that protects the confidentiality of the servicemember. It is modeled after the restricted reporting procedures currently in place for victims of sexual assault. The restricted reporting process mirrored in *the Brandon Act* would allow service members who experience mental health issues to confidentially self-report and receive access to a mental health evaluation and appropriate care without notifying command or law enforcement officials, respecting privacy and streamlining timely access to critical care.

Petty Officer Caserta's death was one of 68 Navy suicides in 2018, which was the highest year on record. Something must change within the military to ensure that those men and women who volunteer to put their lives in harm's way are not subjected to the same stigma and barriers to care as Brandon Caserta. They deserve better.

A copy of the bill text is available [here](#).