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**Gov. Bill Lee Announces Initiatives for Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Efforts**

*Additional funding treats more Tennesseans, takes aim at Tennessee's high suicide rate*

**NASHVILLE, Tenn.** – Today, Tennessee Governor Bill Lee announced three priorities to increase access to mental health treatment and expand suicide prevention efforts across the state.

“The mental health of our citizens is foundational to all other goals we seek to accomplish in education, job growth and public safety,” said Lee. “By prioritizing our mental health safety net and suicide prevention, we are caring for more Tennesseans and building healthier communities.”

Gov. Lee is proposing \$11.2 million in new funding to expand access to services for Tennesseans living with serious mental illness. This investment seeks to cover an additional 7,000 uninsured Tennessee adults through the state’s Behavioral Health Safety Net program, which provides several essential mental health services. Additionally, the investment addresses increasing costs at the state’s four regional mental health institutes and ensures that those facilities will continue to provide high quality care to Tennesseans with the most significant psychiatric needs.

To complement Tennessee’s work in recovery courts and alternative sentencing measures, Gov. Lee is also proposing a \$3 million investment to the Creating Homes Initiative. Since 2000, the program has created more than 20,000 quality, permanent housing opportunities for those living with mental illness. This new investment will expand recovery housing options for Tennesseans struggling with substance abuse.

“In addition to measures that address substance abuse and mental illness, we are tackling Tennessee’s shockingly high suicide rate that is now 20 percent higher than the

national average,” said Lee. “There is tremendous opportunity to engage public-private partnerships as we work to prevent suicide and save lives.”

To address this issue, Gov. Lee is proposing a \$1.1 million investment that will expand the state’s partnership with the Tennessee Suicide Prevention Network (TSPN) to establish a new regional outreach model and increase the Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services’ efforts to focus on interventions at the community level using evidence-based practices.

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