

February 11, 2020

The Honorable Mark Takano
Chairman, House Committee on Veterans' Affairs
U.S. House of Representatives
B234 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Dr. Phil Roe
Ranking Member, House Committee on Veterans' Affairs
U.S. House of Representatives
3460 O'Neill House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20024

Dear Chairman Takano and Ranking Member Roe:

The National Military & Veterans Alliance, (NMVA) a nonpartisan umbrella organization of 35 veteran- and military-serving organizations, endorses HR 5701, the *Care for the Veteran Caregiver Act of 2020*. We urge the earliest consideration by your Committee, including a legislative hearing, mark-up, and Committee vote. We commend Representatives Hudson and Rice for sponsoring the bill and urge you and your colleagues on the Committee to cosponsor the bill.

While the MISSION Act made crucial changes to the Caregiver program (most importantly the expansion of the program to pre-9/11 veterans), time and again our organizations and others raised with you our continued concerns with the Caregiver program. Specifically, the lack of consistent eligibility criteria used by VA in executing the program, the constant fear the most catastrophically disabled veterans live in that they lose their access to the Caregiver program, and the unreasonably short transition time provided Caregivers and families after a participating veteran passes away.

The *Care for the Veteran Caregiver Act* will fix these concerns. Specifically, the bill:

- Directs the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to **extend the stipend payments to and CHAMPVA eligibility for caregivers to at least 180 days** after the death of an eligible veteran, up from the current 90 days. This allows the caregiver enough time to transition after the death of a veteran and aides their adjustment back to or pursuit of work or education opportunities;
- **Eliminates unnecessary and redundant re-evaluation requirements for veterans who require the most significant levels of care** by establishing a permanent eligibility status for the most catastrophically wounded veterans using the existing criteria under the law; and
- **Standardizes nationally the initial and annual eligibility evaluation process** to address the wide variation of criteria used by different VA VISNs and even different medical centers.

NMVA hopes these issues will be addressed during the regulatory process of the expanded Caregiver program required by the MISSION Act. NMVA continues to be concerned with VA's perpetual delays in the roll out of the Caregiver expansion program. VA's continued delays lead us to believe legislative action is needed; and needed now.

NMVA requests your support. Mervyn Jones of the Independence Fund is available to discuss any specific issues you or the Committee may have; he can be reached at M.Jones@IndependenceFund.org.

Sincerely,

Kenneth Greenberg
Director of Veterans & Military Policy
TREA: The Enlisted Association
Co-Director, NMVA

Mervyn L. Jones II
Director of Government Relations
The Independence Fund
Co-Director, NMVA

NMVA member organizations requesting your support:

The Independence Fund
Healing Household 6
TREA: The Enlisted Association
Military Order of World Wars

Sea Service Family Foundation
Japanese American Veterans Association
Military Order of the Purple Heart
AMVETS

Non-NMVA member organizations requesting your support:

Elizabeth Dole Foundation
Caregiver Support Network

National Caregiver Alliance