

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee,

Thank you for providing us with this opportunity to speak to you about policy ideas to help our veterans. These men and women have earned our respect. They have earned our attention to policy issues that affect them. I am grateful to you for constantly working to improve the lives of our nation's heroes.

Not long ago, a friend of mine who is a former military officer and a staunch conservative visited me in my Capitol office to discuss the Republican agenda. I asked him about an issue that might divide us: liberalization of cannabis laws. He answered my question beginning with a discussion about his

three sons who enlisted in the military after 9/11, one of whom returned from service suffering seizures and other ailments. His doctors at the Department of Veterans Affairs determined his prospects for recovery were low. Luckily, his son saw a private doctor who recommended a medication derived from cannabis. Shortly after taking this medication (still illegal under federal law), his seizures, for the most part, ceased.

This is one story among thousands, if not hundreds of thousands, who have experienced the healing or pain relief from the use of medicinal marijuana, yet the VA, due to archaic federal law, cannot recommend this life

improving treatment to our veterans. At a time when our nation experiences an explosion in opioid addiction, Congress currently stands idly by cannabis as an alternative, even as most state governments have legalized medicinal cannabis use to some degree.

Given this fact, it is shameful that our veterans must go to private doctors, pay out of pocket, and violate federal law in order to receive a treatment that could immensely improve their lives. I have been fighting on this issue for many years, and we have come a long way, but there is still much farther to go. I urge you to do right by our veterans, and work to

allow the VA to prescribe them cannabis where appropriate.