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Dear Members,

The Union Veterans Council, AFL-CIO, which represents over a million Union working veterans nationwide, including the tens of thousands that work at the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) would like to voice our support for Chairman Takano's Amendment in the Nature of a Substitute (ANS) to H.R. 3495, the "Improve Well-Being of Veterans Act." This amendment would address the largest concerns that a large number of Veterans, Veterans Service Organizations, and Professional organizations have expressed regarding the original text of H.R. 3495.

The crisis that the veterans' community faces from suicide and mental health issues is one of our leading concerns, that is why we must oppose H.R. 3495 in present form. This bill is simply the wrong bill at the wrong time, it is very concerning to us that it does not require VA to be the primary provider and manager of care provided outside the VA. This will lead to fragmented care, a lack of accountability when it comes to private providers, and will divert much needed resources from building the VA's internal capacity when it comes to deliver clinical care services for mental health. Along with preempting the White House/VA PREVENTS Task Force (Executive Order 13861) findings.

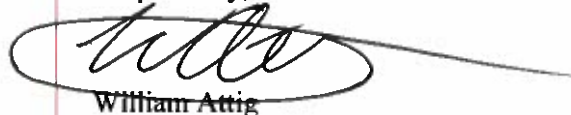
This Amendment would allow us to support the many positive aspects of the IMPROVE Act that will undoubtedly improve the veterans' community while addressing the major concerns that have been stated by many in the VSO community.

There is always room for improvement when working to meet the healthcare needs of veterans. Every resource afforded to the VA should first go to improving and building the VA's internal capacity to provide timely, quality services to veterans. With privatization bills like H.R. 3495, it will become harder for the VA to expand its capacity to do so. Veterans deserve better than uncoordinated care from unproven entities given open-ended grants with virtually no oversight.

We ask you to please support the Chairman's discussion draft to H.R. 3495, the "Improve Well-Being of Veterans Act." The Union Veterans Councils, AFL-CIO looks forward to working with you and the VA to improve and expand VA mental health and suicide prevention programs.

For additional information or questions, please contact Will Attig at [wattig@unionveterans.org](mailto:wattig@unionveterans.org).

Respectfully,



William Attig

Executive Director

Union Veterans Council, AFL-CIO