

December 4, 2019

The Honorable Mark Takano
Chair, House Committee on Veterans Affairs
B234 Rayburn House Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Phil Roe
Ranking Member, House Committee on Veterans Affairs
3460 O'Neill House Building
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Chairman Takano and Representative Roe:

Thank you for making veteran suicide prevention such an important priority for your Committee. As veteran serving organizations running novel and unique programs to combat veteran suicide across regardless of geographic location, we've been following with interest the progress of HR 3495, *The Improve Well-Being for Veterans Act*.

Federal grant funds, such as those proposed in HR 3495 and the various legislative discussion drafts which have been shared, could make a huge difference in our ability to provide innovative suicide prevention programs. Further, such grants would allow us to scale our efforts to expand to specific geographic regions where there are veteran suicide prevention programs under a "hub-and-spoke" model discussed during the Committee's hearing of November 20th.

While the regional coordination service grants envisioned in the legislation are important, and as a group we support them, they are not enough to adequately engage on veteran suicide prevention. We also need innovative and non-traditional veteran suicide prevention programs which combat veteran isolation and lack of community connection wherever those "communities" may lie.

For example, we find many veterans are initially hesitant to engage local regional support systems because they don't believe anyone locally understands their unique experiences as veterans. By bringing together veterans without regard to geographic region to explore the issues of isolation and lack of community connection, organizations like ours can help these veterans understand the importance of reaching back to the VA and to local community organizations for further help.

Therefore, we ask the Committee ensure any grant funding legislation reported allow grants from organizations not organized along geographic or regional support models, with equal access to such grants as those organizations which are organized along geographic or regional models.

We believe a legislative compromise is at hand and implore you to seek every opportunity to reach one and report such legislation out of Committee by the end of this year. If we can be of any assistance in reaching such a compromise and accelerating legislative consideration, we are always available to help.

Very Respectfully,

The Independence Fund
TREA – The Enlisted Association
National Association of American Veterans, Inc.
Veterans Healing Farm
Travis Manion Foundation
Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS)
National Alliance to End Veteran Suicide

AMVETS – American Veterans
PsychHub
SAW – Save a Warrior
Once a Soldier, Inc.
Angel Force
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention
Psych Armor