

STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD

CONGRESSWOMAN DELIA C. RAMIREZ

JOINT HEARING: Legislative Presentation of Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States
& Multi VSOs: PVA, WWP, NASDVA, MRC, BSF, IAVA, BVA, SWAN, SVA, AMVETS

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Thank you to the Chairmen and Ranking Members for holding today's hearing. I also want to thank our witnesses for joining us today.

I want to start today by acknowledging the tremendous work and the significant contributions veterans service organizations (VSOs) have made and continue to make.

Over the past year, I have had the honor of meeting with several VSOs during my time as a Member of Congress. VSOs do critical work directly supporting veterans and engage collaboratively with the Members of this committee to ensure that veterans have a successful transition into civilian life.

Thank you for your work and a special thank you to the veterans representing Illinois and the VFW—thank you for your service and your commitment to the betterment of the lives of every veteran in the country.

As you know, prior to coming to congress I spent over 20 years in the non-profit sector providing housing assistance and other social services support to my community, including veterans. It is imperative that we continue to advocate for and advance solutions that keep veterans sheltered and housed and that we keep supporting our veterans experiencing homelessness.

I want to pivot and take some time to talk about education. Education is and has been a door opener for so many of us, including student veterans. We also know that getting into a college or university is just the first step. Finding housing, being able to eat, and for many of our student veterans who have families, securing childcare are critical needs. As Members of this Committee we must continue to advocate for solutions that prioritize ALL needs of our veterans and that includes parity in education and funding child care.

Additionally, a successful transition into civilian life for our student veterans must include safeguards against bad actors who seek to defraud veterans for their benefits. That is why this Congress, I introduced H.R. 1767, the Student Benefit Restoration Act, which would establish an across the board process for student veterans to have their GI Bill education benefits restored in qualifying instances, such as when a student veteran has been defrauded by an educational institution. I want to thank SVA for their partnership on this legislative effort. Protecting our veterans from exploitation is incredibly important to me and it is vital that we keep the drum beating on this issue.

Lastly, as one of the few women and women of color sitting on the Veterans' Affairs committee, I want to bring attention to issues that are impacting our servicewomen. The VA has made significant strides to improve women's health care over the last several years, but I think we can agree there is still more work that needs to be done. We must continue to address disparities in health care and collect demographic data including race/ethnicity and gender so that EVERY veteran receives the care they need.

Thank you.