



June 20, 2024

The Honorable Mike Bost  
Chair  
House Committee on Veterans' Affairs  
364 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20003

### **STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD**

**Hearing:** *"A Call to Action: Meeting the Needs of the Spinal Cord Injury and Disorders (SCI/D) Veteran Community"*

Dear Chairman Bost, Ranking Member Takano, and members of the committee:

On behalf of the Christopher & Dana Reeve Foundation and the 1 in 50 individuals living with paralysis in the United States, we would like to thank you for holding the hearing, *"A Call to Action: Meeting the Needs of the Spinal Cord Injury and Disorders (SCI/D) Veteran Community"*. Through the Paralysis Resource Center (PRC), the Reeve Foundation is proud to help current service members and veterans who are living with spinal cord injury and related disorders.

For over 20 years, the Reeve Foundation has operated the Paralysis Resource Center (PRC), through a cooperative grant, competing in a rigorous, competitive application process every five years. The PRC is supported by federal appropriations to the Administration for Community Living (ACL), within the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). [The PRC](#) is a free, comprehensive, national source of informational support for people with paralysis and their caregivers. The primary goals are to foster independence, promote health, and improve quality of life. The PRC has assisted over 125,000 individuals and families, including 5,773 veterans and military service members.

### **Military and Veterans Program**

One of our most critical PRC programs is the Military and Veterans Program (MVP). The MVP program provides specialized resources to help individuals navigate military and civilian benefits as they reintegrate into their communities. The program provides personalized information tailored to each person's needs by an Information Specialist, considering factors such as branch of service, type of injury, and home state. MVP also helps with rehabilitation information and referrals. Due to staffing shortages at VA (Veteran Affairs) SCI/D hospitals<sup>1</sup>, there is an increasing need to refer service members and veterans to other facilities. Our Information Specialists work with state and county Departments of Veterans Affairs to help navigate referrals to Model SCI (Spinal Cord Injury) Centers and CARF-designated SCI/D rehabilitation centers.

### **Support for Caregivers**

The role of a caregiver is one of the most important forms of support for people living with spinal cord injury and paralysis. Caregivers help with all daily activities, ranging from eating, bathing,

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<sup>1</sup> OIG Determination of Veterans Health Administration's Severe Occupational Staffing Shortages Fiscal Year 2023 August



coordinating transportation to assisting with medical needs such as medication and wound care. Direct care workers such as home health aides, nursing assistants and personal care attendants (PCAs) are essential workers who are in extreme demand, due to staffing shortages<sup>2</sup>. The Reeve Foundation supports the Senator Elizabeth Dole 21st Century Veterans Healthcare and Benefits Improvement Act (H.R.8371), which includes provisions aimed at addressing these barriers to receiving the support and care that services members and their families need.

### **Investing in SCI/D Research**

The Reeve Foundation was founded in 1982 by families determined to find a cure for paralysis. At the time, it was not only an act of hope, but defiance: the idea that spinal cord injuries could be treated was inconceivable. Over the next four decades, we have invested more than \$140 million in groundbreaking research that has helped pave the way for progress. As 21st-century technology and cumulative scientific gains converge, we are on the cusp of a new era in spinal cord injury research. Continued congressional funding for VA SCI/D research contributes to these advancements and benefits the larger SCI/D community. We also advocate for increased federal funding for paralysis research sponsored by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the Department of Defense (DOD) through the Congressionally Directed Medical Research Programs (CDMRP).

Once again, thank you for your efforts to increase the support for veterans who live with spinal cord injury and paralysis. The Reeve Foundation advocates for funding that supports access to quality medical services for our nation's service members that live with SCI/D and those that care for them, and continued investments in groundbreaking spinal cord injury research initiatives.

### **Information Required by Rule XI 2(g) of the House of Representatives**

Administration for Community Living (ACL), Paralysis Resource Center (PRC)

- FY' 21: July 2021-June 2022 \$8,700,000
- FY' 22: July 2022-June 2023 \$8,700,000
- One-time funding to expand Public Health Workforce COVID-19 \$160,000 Awarded 3/31/2022
- Supplemental Award September 2022 \$747,037
- FY'23: July 2023-July 2024 \$10,447,000

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<sup>2</sup> OIG Determination of Veterans Health Administration's Severe Occupational Staffing Shortages Fiscal Year 2023 August