

April 23, 2015

Representative Dan Benishek
Subcommittee on Health, Committee on Veterans' Affairs
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Benishek:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this statement regarding draft legislation to improve reproductive treatment provided to certain disabled veterans. This is incredibly important legislation for our wounded warriors who expect our government to care for them if they are injured in their service to our country. The ability to procreate is the most basic and fundamental desire of human beings. If that ability is damaged as a result of their service, then we owe it to them to provide access to medical treatments that will allow them to become a parent.

RESOLVE: The National Infertility Association was founded in 1974 to provide information, support, awareness and advocacy for women and men living with infertility. RESOLVE is the oldest and largest patient advocacy organization in the U.S. and the only patient organization advocating for access to infertility services for our active duty military and veterans. We applaud the committee for discussing this important topic.

The draft legislation provides for certain disabled veterans to access in vitro fertilization (IVF). Right now the Veterans Administration is prohibited from providing access to IVF, which causes a critical gap in coverage since that same benefit is offered to wounded service-members still covered under TRICARE. While the TRICARE supplemental benefit for certain wounded service-members is needed, most of those who could benefit from IVF transition to the Veteran's health system and by the time they are ready to become a parent, they discover that the VA does not provide access to IVF. This draft legislation will fix this gap in service and solve a major problem facing our disabled veterans.

This bill also provides for access to reproductive care for the spouse of a veteran. While the VA is not responsible for the healthcare of spouses and dependents, reproduction is unique in that male and female gametes (sperm and egg) are needed as well as a female to carry the pregnancy. Only providing care to the male or female does not work – both must be treated.

We do ask that the committee consider all of the injuries that may result in infertility, as the bill only covers injury to the reproductive organs or spinal cord. Amputations, Traumatic Brain Injuries and exposure to toxins and chemicals can also impact the ability to procreate without assisted reproductive technologies. All of our wounded veterans with infertility should have access to this coverage.

We applaud the committee for this important first step in opening up advanced reproductive care to veterans. We are hopeful that this first step will lead to further coverage in the future for all veterans, not just those with a service related injury; access to IVF for service-members covered under TRICARE;

coverage for fertility preservation before deployment (the freezing of sperm, eggs and/or embryos); access to care for those who are single or not married with infertility; and coverage for the use of donor gametes (donated sperm, egg or embryos) for those who can no longer produce viable gametes to have a child.

We stand ready to work with Congress to get this important legislation passed as quickly as possible. Our Veterans are waiting – we owe it to them to fix this coverage gap with the VA and let them access the advanced medical care that they need and so deserve.

Sincerely,

Barbara L. Collura
President & CEO

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