

**STATEMENT OF
THE HONORABLE SCOTT PETERS
CALIFORNIA'S FIFTY-SECOND DISTRICT
BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON HEALTH
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

November 17, 2015

Thank you to Chairman Benishek, Ranking Member Brownley and members of the subcommittee, for agreeing to hear H.R. 2639, the Marriage and Family Therapists for Veterans Act. This subcommittee works tirelessly to provide veterans the care they deserve, and this bill can help achieve that goal for which we all strive.

My bill is short and simple. It will modify the current US Code to allow well trained Marriage and Family Therapists (MFTs) the opportunity to provide mental health services to veterans, and their families, through the VA.

The current standards make it impossible for many MFTs to work at the VA despite being licensed in the state they operate, due to non-alignment with federal hiring requirements. Some of the most affected applicants are those in California, Florida, and New York. My bill will open the VA application process to those who are qualified through regionally accredited programs and established regulatory board examinations. Furthermore, this bill allows the VA to maintain its authority to make the final decisions on who is hired. Fixing this problem will help foster competition in hiring practices at the VA and America's veterans will be the greatest benefactor.

My intent is that the VA will recognize MFT's who have the qualifications outlined in this bill are able to apply for jobs and be hired at the VA to increase the mental health care that is available. I look forward to working with the committee to enhance the care our veterans receive and appreciate the consideration.