



June 6, 2022

The Honorable Mark Takano
Chairman
House Committee on Veterans' Affairs
364 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mike Bost
Ranking Member
House Committee on Veterans' Affairs
364 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Takano & Ranking Member Bost:

The undersigned are writing to express WestCare Foundation's (WestCare) support for H.R. 6273, VA Zero Suicide Demonstration Project Act of 2021.

WestCare is a network of nonprofit behavioral health care organizations in 17 states, three US territories and two Republics. Across the network, we provide services to thousands of veterans who are struggling with addiction and behavioral health issues each and every day.

As you well know, suicide is a major public health issue and among the top ten causes of death in the United States. And for more than a decade the suicide rate has been rising in general US population and especially among veterans. While the US Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has identified preventing suicide prevention as its highest clinical priority in its current strategic plan, this will require crafting new policies that reflect innovative and proven whole health approaches. The Zero Suicide Initiative pilot program is a good next step in building on the VA's suicide prevention efforts.

We are grateful for the leadership of Congresswoman Susie Lee and her colleagues. The VA Zero Suicide Demonstration Act will begin to provide much needed support to women and men who have sacrificed for our country and now need the nation's help. WestCare stands ready to work with the Committee to quickly pass HR 6273, and appreciates the Committee's attention to this important legislation.

Sincerely,

Richard E. Steinberg
President/CEO

Craig Knierim, USAF, Col (ret)
Senior Vice President, Veterans Services