



Statement for the Record

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Prepared for the

U.S. House Committee on Veterans Affairs
Subcommittee on Health

June 12, 2025

Chairwoman Miller-Meeks, Ranking Member Brownley, and distinguished Members of the House Committee on Veterans Affairs' Subcommittee on Health,

On behalf of K9s For Warriors, we thank you for inviting us to submit a statement for the record for today's legislative hearing. As the nation's leading provider of highly trained Service Dogs to military Veterans suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), traumatic brain injury (TBI), and military sexual trauma (MST), we are honored to submit this statement in strong support of H.R. 2605, *The Service Dogs Assisting Veterans Act* (SAVES).

Since our founding in 2011, K9s For Warriors has witnessed firsthand the life-changing impact that expertly trained Service Dogs have on the mental health and overall well-being of Veterans returning from service with invisible wounds. Our three-week, evidence-based program pairs Veterans with highly trained Service Dogs in a fully immersive, residential training environment designed to restore independence, confidence, and quality of life. With graduates of our program located in all 50 States, Puerto Rico, the Philippines, and Guam, we understand the needs of Veterans from all eras who seek to regain their dignity and independence.

The outcomes are profound: reduced suicide risk, depression, and anxiety, decreased reliance on medications, and stronger community reintegration. In fact, it's scientifically proven. Last year, the first National Institutes of Health-funded clinical trial of its kind, led by Dr. Maggie O'Haire of the University of Arizona College of Veterinary Medicine, linked the pairing of Service Dogs with military Veterans to lowered PTSD severity, odds of PTSD diagnosis, and other negative mental health symptoms, and to increased levels of life satisfaction and overall psychological well-beingⁱ.

H.R. 2605, the SAVES Act, represents a critical step forward in recognizing and expanding the reach of these lifesaving interventions. By authorizing a competitive grant program within the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs to support eligible nonprofit organizations that provide Service Dogs to Veterans, the SAVES Act would help ensure that more Veterans — particularly those coping with PTSD and related conditions — have access to these proven resources.

The funding is critical, as it costs upwards of \$50,000 to train a single Service Dog. Exacerbating the situation, the demand for Service Dogs isn't slowing down, it's greater now than ever before. Thousands of Veterans are on the wait lists of these organizations – at K9s, we have almost 400 Veterans waiting to be paired with their battle buddies and nearly the same number of applications currently being processed.

Also importantly, the bill's framework upholds high standards for dog training in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and evidenced-based practices for Veteran care, while ensuring diversity and flexibility among nonprofit providers. This inclusive approach recognizes that no single model fits all Veterans, and it ensures that organizations with demonstrated success, like K9s For Warriors, can continue to serve Veterans in need. We are also encouraged that the SAVES Act promotes robust program evaluation and reporting requirements, which will help build on existing research and ensure accountability and quality in service delivery.

Veteran suicide prevention remains one of our nation's most pressing challenges. Expanding access to Service Dogs through public-private partnerships like those envisioned in the SAVES Act provides an innovative and complementary solution. K9s For Warriors is proud to lend its full support to this bipartisan, bicameral legislation and stands ready to assist the Committee and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs in its implementation.

We are thankful to Congressman Morgan Luttrell, Congressman Morgan McGarvey, Congresswoman Miller-Meeks, and many other Members of Congress for leading this important, bipartisan effort. We appreciate each distinguished Member of the Committee's steadfast leadership on behalf of our nation's Veterans, caregivers, and their families.

Respectfully submitted,

Daniel Bean
Chief Executive Officer
K9s For Warriors

About K9s For Warriors

Determined to end Veteran suicide, K9s For Warriors is the nation's leading provider of highly trained Service Dogs to military Veterans suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injury, and/or military sexual trauma. With most dogs being rescues, this innovative program allows the Warrior and Service Dog team to build an unwavering bond that facilitates their collective healing and recovery. Founded in 2011 as a 501 (c)(3) nonprofit organization, K9s For Warriors remains committed to bringing widespread awareness to Veterans' mental health and contributing to policy-level reform.

The organization's operation facilities include: K9s For Warriors National Headquarters (Ponte Vedra, FL), Davis Family Mega Kennel (Ponte Vedra, FL), Petco Love K9 Center (San Antonio, TX) and Warrior Ranch (Helotes, TX). To learn more, visit www.k9sforwarriors.org.

ⁱ Rodriguez, K. E., Laurinec, A. N., & O'Haire, M. E. (2024). Association of service dog ownership with veterans' mental health and suicide risk. *JAMA Network Open*, 7(4), e2410083. <https://doi.org/10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2024.10083>