

January 9, 2026

The Honorable Mike Bost
Chair
House Veteran Affairs Committee
344 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20024

The Honorable Mark Takano
Ranking Member
House Veteran Affairs Committee
364 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20024

RE: Centerstone Letter of Support for H.R. 2283, the Recognizing Community Organizations for Veteran Engagement and Recovery (RECOVER) Act.

Dear Chairman Bost and Ranking Member Takano;

As Veteran Service Officer at the VA Community Based Outpatient Clinic in Hinesville, GA, I am writing to urge your support for H.R. 2283, the Recognizing Community Organizations for Veteran Engagement and Recovery (RECOVER) Act. This critical legislation addresses an urgent crisis facing our nation's veterans and represents a vital opportunity to save lives through enhanced mental health services.

In our experience, external partnerships, like the one we have with Centerstone, have been a collaborative partnership with our local VA services. These vital community partnerships, which can be further strengthened through H.R. 2283, serve as a safety net to ensure that no veteran in need of urgent mental health access falls through the cracks.

Additionally, there may be veterans without VA connected benefits, many of whom experienced a behavioral health incident while in active duty that resulted in the loss of their benefits. When some of these veterans receive services through our community partners, the clinical team is able to connect their service-related traumas to the reason behind their discharge status. This can result in more veterans connecting to their VA benefits to support and acknowledge their service to our country.

In brief, I believe this legislation will further strengthen our collaborative community partnerships and urge you to advance the RECOVER Act.

The Crisis We Face

Our veterans are experiencing a mental health crisis of unprecedented proportions. With an average of 17.5 veteran suicides occurring each day as of 2021, and veterans facing a suicide rate 57.3% higher than non-veteran adults, we cannot afford to maintain the status quo. Despite significant increases in VA spending to address this crisis, current efforts have proven largely ineffective, and many veterans continue to face bureaucratic barriers when seeking immediate mental health support.

The demand for quality mental health care far exceeds current capacity. This gap between need and available services is particularly acute in underserved communities with large veteran populations at high risk for suicide.

The RECOVER Act Solution

H.R. 2283 offers a targeted, evidence-based approach to addressing this crisis through:

Strategic Investment: The bill establishes a \$20 million, three-year pilot program that would distribute grants of up to \$1.5 million to qualified non-profit outpatient mental health facilities. This funding is entirely additive—new money that does not redirect any existing VA program funding or infrastructure.

Fills Critical Gaps, Doesn't Duplicate Services: The RECOVER Act targets communities where VA care is delayed or unavailable, particularly in areas with long wait times, shortages of VA clinicians, or high suicide risk. This legislation fills service gaps rather than duplicating existing VA services.

Evidence-Based Care: The legislation specifically focuses on expanding culturally competent, evidence-based mental health services tailored to veterans' unique needs. Only non-profit providers with at least three years of operation and demonstrated clinical effectiveness, cultural competence, and financial accountability are eligible for grants.

Strengthens, Doesn't Replace, the VA: Rather than privatizing or replacing VA services, this bill strengthens public-private partnerships. Funded clinics must promote enrollment in the VA patient system, coordinate care with the VA, and ensure continuity of care. The bill requires clinics to offer free care to veterans and cannot deny services based on insurance status.

Robust Accountability: The bill includes strong accountability provisions requiring clinical outcomes and veteran demographics, demonstrate effective use of federal funds, and justify their impact through data-driven metrics. Additionally, the VA must submit a comprehensive report to Congress evaluating the pilot program's effectiveness within 180 days of its conclusion.

Why This Matters to Our Community

As healthcare providers on the front lines, we see firsthand the challenges veterans face in accessing timely, appropriate mental health care. Many community-based organizations are already working to fill these gaps but remain under-resourced. While programs like the Staff Sergeant Parker Gordon Fox Suicide Prevention Grant Program have provided valuable support, there are currently no VA programs offering grants specifically for clinical, evidence-based mental health care.

- Reduce dangerous wait times for mental health services
- Expand capacity in areas with the greatest need
- Ensure veterans receive culturally competent care from trained professionals
- Create sustainable partnerships between community providers and the VA

In conclusion, the RECOVER Act offers a concrete solution to the mental health crisis impacting our veterans. We strongly urge you to advance this critical legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dennis J. Boothe".

Dennis J. Boothe

Veteran Service Officer