



TRAGEDY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM FOR SURVIVORS

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January 13, 2026

The Honorable Mariannette Miller-Meeks
Chairwoman, Subcommittee on Health
House Committee on Veterans' Affairs
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Julia Brownley
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Health
House Committee on Veterans' Affairs
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairwoman Miller-Meeks and Ranking Member Brownley,

The Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS) is writing to express our strong support for the ***Recognizing Community Organizations for Veteran Engagement and Recovery (RECOVER) Act (H.R. 2283)***. This important legislation would establish a comprehensive, three-year pilot program that would provide targeted financial grants to qualifying outpatient mental health facilities to help increase critical access to culturally competent and evidence-based mental health care for veterans in underserved rural and urban areas.

Since our founding, TAPS has supported more than 30,000 individuals whose military and veteran loved ones died by suicide. In 2025, 29 percent of those coming to TAPS for care each day were grieving a death resulting from suicide and a life that included military service. TAPS conducts in-depth interviews with each survivor to reflect on their loved one's life before suicide. One typical pattern identified among thousands of military and veteran suicide survivors is the call for the nation and military community to prioritize mental health care as an essential element to overall wellness and readiness.

Above all, mental health care needs to be consistent. The bonds formed by veterans and providers at the start of the care cycle are critical. Having to retell their difficult stories time and time again to new providers at each visit can be debilitating. Abruptly changing care teams, especially when a veteran becomes suicidal, only heightens the sense of crisis. Familiarity and predictability are keys to effective mental health care.

Veterans are more likely to seek help from an established culturally competent provider when they feel a sense of safety and trust. Talking about thoughts of suicide with an established provider — when they are not necessarily intent or have a plan for suicide — should be seen as positive in that the veteran is trusting enough to share some of their deeper struggles.

TAPS acknowledges and appreciates the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) ongoing investment in mental health services and suicide prevention, which includes care for posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), psychological effects of military sexual trauma (MST), depression, grief, anxiety, and other needs. TAPS views the **RECOVER Act** as a supplemental measure to enhance, not replace, these current VA efforts. Improving timely access to VA mental health care providers and accessing qualified outpatient mental health facilities, will provide better mental health care outcomes for our nation's veterans.

In addition, veteran and surviving families also need timely mental health care support, especially survivors grieving a military loved one who died by suicide. These survivors often cope with symptoms of trauma and complicated grief, putting them at increased risk for suicide, posttraumatic stress, and other mental health concerns due to the traumatic nature of their loss. It is imperative that we not wait until a crisis occurs; increasing access to mental health care providers and providing a sense of belonging and social connection earlier in the grieving process for survivors will decrease individual risks and help save lives.

On behalf of the 120,000-plus surviving families TAPS is honored to serve, we thank you for your time and consideration. On behalf of our military survivor community, TAPS appreciates your leadership in ensuring the best possible future for our veterans, families, caregivers, and survivors.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Bonnie Carroll". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the word "Respectfully,".

Bonnie Carroll

President and Founder, Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS)