

REP. YOUNG KIM STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD

Thank you, Chairman Luttrell and Ranking Member Pappas, for holding this legislative hearing.

I am excited to see H.R. 8879, the “Improving VA Training for Military Sexual Trauma Claims Act” discussed in today’s hearing.

Currently, the VA must help veterans filing disability benefits claims for military sexual trauma, or MST, gather evidence for their claims. However, these claims are hard to prove since service records do not usually confirm such incidents.

Unfortunately, VA claims processors and examiners do not have sufficient training to recognize indirect markers of MST or training to avoid forcing victims to relive their trauma. In fact, disability compensation examiners are only required to complete an outdated sensitivity training once every five years.

The Improving VA Training for Military Sexual Trauma Act would require that VA employees involved with MST claims complete annual training to identify evidence of MST claims and annual sensitivity training to avoid retraumatizing victims of MST.

Every year, the VA Secretary must update the training and submit a report to Congress, developing a plan to improve training and ensure that veterans are not retraumatized. The VA would be able to access all service records when a veteran files a disability compensation claim based on MST.

H.R. 8879 is a commonsense measure that ensures VA staff are prepared to provide veterans with the support and protection they deserve. Streamlining the MST claim process and improving VA training is a win for our veterans.

I thank the Committee for considering H.R. 8879 and Representative Budzinski for co-leading this bill with me.

Thank you, and I yield back.