

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-1803

May 9, 2018

Chairman Phil Roe
U.S. House Veterans Affairs Committee
335 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Roe,

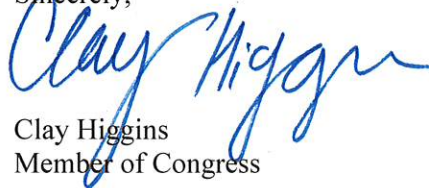
Congratulations on the bipartisan passage of HR 5674, the VA Mission Act of 2018 through the House Veterans Affairs Committee on May 8, 2018. This significant legislation will transform the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs into a modern, integrated, accountable healthcare system that better serves our veterans by providing greater access to health care in their communities.

As you know, section 105 of the HR 5674 authorizes access to walk-in care for enrolled veterans who have used VA health care services in the 24-month period before seeking walk-in services. Ensuring access to care at walk-in clinics and federally qualified health centers is an important step towards increasing access to care for all veterans. However, I was disappointed to see that the legislation did not explicitly include urgent care centers as well. Urgent care centers provide timely and high-quality health care in communities where veterans live, often at a significantly lower cost than expensive and unnecessary emergency room visits.

I have been committed to authorizing the VA to cover the cost of necessary, service-connected care received at urgent care centers, and while not explicit, I believe that section 105 can and will establish a mechanism for the VHA to cover the cost of certain services at urgent care centers. Section 105, together with recent efforts by TriWest to open access to urgent care for veterans in Southern California, can significantly impact the epidemic of unnecessary emergency room visits while ensuring veterans receive crucial care immediately.

As HR 5674 advances, it is righteous that work to ensure this legislation strengthens veterans' access to timely, urgent, but non-emergency care while decreasing the number of unnecessary and costly emergency room visits.

Sincerely,



Clay Higgins
Member of Congress