

The Honorable Gregorio Kilili Camacho Sablan  
Statement for the Full Committee Legislative Hearing  
House Veterans' Affairs Committee  
10:00 A.M, Thursday, September 10, 2020

Chairman Takano, Ranking Member Roe, and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for including on today's agenda a discussion draft of the Veterans COMPACT Act. This draft includes provisions from my bill, H.R. 5024, which gives veterans one year of VA health care after they separate from active service. By providing health coverage during this transition period, our nation can better assist veterans succeed as they move into civilian life.

The transition to civilian life presents challenges for veterans and their families nationwide, including the Northern Mariana Islands. Figuring out their next steps in education, employment, housing, and health care is difficult. My legislation makes things easier by removing the burden of health care, at least during that critical first year of re-entry.

Knowing they have this coverage — including the mental health care that can be so important during transition — will free veterans to focus on re-establishing family relationships and finding a new career.

As in my bill, the draft also requires the VA, the Pentagon, and the Department of Labor all to make sure veterans are well informed about their eligibility for this transitional health care coverage. However, the draft does not extend this coverage to women and men leaving the Reserve or National Guard, who were not called to active duty, or full-time service.

A legislative remedy to this oversight was suggested by the Enlisted Association of the National Guard and by the Reserve Officers Association and was incorporated in H.R. 5024.

As we consider improvements to the draft, I urge the committee to incorporate that legislative remedy to extend coverage to these Guard and Reserve members.

Finally, the draft also seeks to improve Vet Centers, which veterans in my district do not have. As I have done in other bills before this committee, I look forward to improving the draft to address the lack of this service in the Northern Mariana Islands.

Thank you.