

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 17, 2020

The Honorable Debbie Wasserman Schultz
Chairwoman
Subcommittee on Military Construction,
Veterans Affairs and Related Agencies
HT-2, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable John Carter
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Military Construction,
Veterans Affairs and Related Agencies
HVC-227, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman Wasserman Schultz and Ranking Member Carter,

We write to request inclusion of language in the fiscal year 2021 Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act to ensure adequate care for veterans suffering from severe traumatic brain injuries (TBIs) who require long-term residential care.

Since 2014, over 470,000 veterans have been diagnosed with TBIs. From 2016, when the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) began tracking severe TBIs as a separate category, until August 2019, 3,375 veterans were diagnosed with severe TBIs. These men and women served our country bravely, and now require long-term care. The VA must anticipate and be prepared for the needs of these veterans and their families.

While veterans with mild or moderate TBIs may return to full health after appropriate care, veterans with severe TBIs will be affected for the rest of their lives. Those veterans are likely to exhibit changes in memory, reasoning, impulse control, appropriate behavior, language, and emotional regulation. As a result, they will require an intensive level of long-term care.

For some veterans with severe TBIs, the VA's Caregiver Program is an acceptable option. However, not every veteran with severe TBI has a caregiver who can provide the level of daily attention required. Further, as caregivers age, veterans will find themselves in need of professional long-term care. Given that most veterans who experience severe TBIs are young and physically active, traditional long-term care facilities, such as nursing homes, are not usually a good fit. A more appropriate option for such veterans is high-quality specialty residential facilities that cater services for individuals who have suffered severe TBIs. Access to such facilities provides every veteran with the best chance for a fulfilling and independent life.

Despite repeated inquiries from Congress, the VA has been unable to articulate how it plans to provide this type of care for veterans with severe TBIs; VA caseworkers and stakeholders are unaware of programs that would pay for long-term care; and families of veterans in need of such services are unable to clearly identify programs that will help their loved ones.

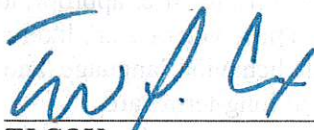
On February 19, 2020, the GAO released a report entitled "Veterans' Use of Long-Term Care is Increasing, and the VA Faces Challenges in Meeting the Demand" (GAO-20-284) which identified long-term care for specialty needs as an area that needs to be addressed. The report states that the VA's Geriatric and Extended Care Office "has not established measurable goals for its efforts to address difficulties meeting veterans' needs for specialty care" and that "without measurable

goals...VA is limited in its ability to better plan for and understand progress towards addressing the challenges it faces meeting veterans' long-term care needs."

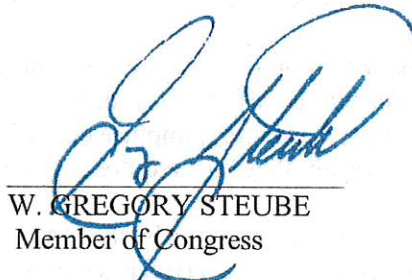
As a result, we request that the following language be included in the fiscal year 2021 Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies appropriations bill:

The Committee notes the increasing prevalence of deployment-related traumatic brain injuries (TBIs) including those resulting from the recent attack on servicemembers stationed at the Ain Al-Asad airbase in Iraq. This increase continues to demonstrate the longstanding need for providing adequate long-term specialty care for veterans suffering from severe TBIs. The Committee further notes the GAO report entitled "Veterans' Use of Long-Term Care is Increasing, and VA Faces Challenges in Meeting the Demand" (GAO-20-284) which reached a similar conclusion. The Committee remains concerned about the Department's inability to articulate a plan to provide such care to veterans with severe TBIs. The Committee directs the Department to publish and make publicly available its long-term contract for care for severe TBI survivors in non-VA facilities no later than 30 days after enactment of this Act. If no such contract exists, the Committee directs the Department, through consultation with external stakeholders, to establish such a contract no later than 180 days after enactment of this Act. The Committee also notes the GAO's conclusion that the Department faces challenges providing long-term care to veterans in rural areas, and directs the Department to submit a report on the current and projected need for residential care for veterans with severe TBIs, especially in rural areas, no later than 180 days after enactment of this Act.

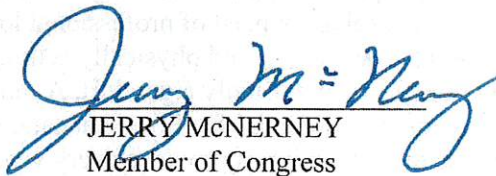
Sincerely,



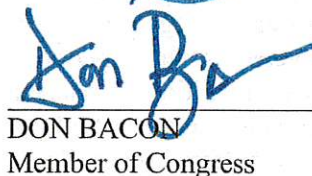
TJ COX
Member of Congress



W. GREGORY STEUBE
Member of Congress



JERRY MCNERNEY
Member of Congress



DON BACON
Member of Congress

Member of Congress

VA Long Team Care for TBIs, FY2021
List of Signatories
March 17th, 2020

TRENT KELLY	AYANNA PRESSLEY	CATHY MCMORRIS RODGERS
DAVE LOEBSACK	SUSAN A. DAVIS	ROBERT C. "BOBBY" SCOTT
GREG GIANFORTE	JASON CROW	DEAN PHILLIPS
JOSEPH D. MORELLE	STEVEN HORSFORD	AL LAWSON
JAHANA HAYES	LIZZIE FLETCHER	BRADLEY S. SCHNEIDER
TULSI GABBARD	ILHAN OMAR	ANGIE CRAIG
ELISSA SLOTKIN	MARY GAY SCANLON	SHARICE L. DAVIDS
SYLVIA R. GARCIA	RASHIDA TLAIB	JIM BANKS
MATT GAETZ	BRIAN FITZPATRICK	TED S. YOHO, D.V.M.
LUCY MCBATH	LISA BLUNT ROCHESTER	JOSH HARDER
KATHY CASTOR	G. K. BUTTERFIELD	STEVE COHEN
DIANA DEGETTE	PETER A. DEFAZIO	ANDRÉ CARSON
DANNY K. DAVIS	BOBBY L. RUSH	ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON
GUS BILIRAKIS	BILL FLORES	DAVID B. MCKINLEY, P.E.
JOAQUIN CASTRO	JULIA BROWNLEY	HENRY C. "HANK" JOHNSON, JR.
HARLEY ROUDA	DON YOUNG	LINDA T. SÁNCHEZ
WILLIAM R. KEATING	BILL PASCRELL, JR.	MARKWAYNE MULLIN
TONY CÁRDENAS	JOHN KATKO	DAVID P. ROE, M.D.
VICENTE GONZALEZ	DEBBIE DINGELL	DEBBIE MUCARSEL-POWELL
ANNA G. ESHOO	JOSH GOTTHEIMER	THOMAS R. SUOZZI
RO KHANNA	TOM O'HALLERAN	ALEXANDRIA OCASIO-CORTEZ
COLIN Z. ALLRED	CYNTHIA AXNE	JEFFERSON VAN DREW

JOE CUNNINGHAM

MARK DESAULNIER

SUSIE LEE

ELAINE G. LURIA

JESÚS G. "CHUY" GARCÍA

JEFF DUNCAN

ABIGAIL D. SPANBERGER

GREGORIO KILILI CAMACHO SABLÁN