



February 10, 2022

Letter of Support for the Veterans Health Care Freedom Act

Dear Senator Blackburn,

On behalf of Concerned Veterans for America (CVA) and the thousands of veterans and military families around the country we represent, we would like to offer our strong support for the Veterans Health Care Freedom Act to create a pilot program to provide eligible veterans full health care choice.

While the VA MISSION Act significantly expanded health care choices for veterans through the new access standards, veterans still do not have the same options as most Americans regarding where and when they access care. Longstanding challenges exist within the VA health care system to deliver timely and quality care to our veterans.

Even with expanded choice under the VA MISSION Act, during the COVID-19 pandemic access became increasingly difficult. Millions of appointments were canceled at the VA due to the pandemic and veterans often could not get the VA to agree to refer them to community care providers.¹ The Veterans Health Care Freedom Act will remove barriers to care and fully implement recommendation #1 from the bipartisan Commission on Care to create a fully integrated health care system where veterans can choose the health care provider that best meets their needs.²

The Veterans Health Care Freedom Act leverages the Center for Innovation for Care and Payment authorized by the VA MISSION Act to create a three-year pilot program expanding health care choice for veterans. By using existing authorities in the law, the pilot program removes the set of conditions in the VA MISSION Act for community care eligibility and grants full choice to all eligible veterans in select pilot program regions. This pilot program would operate like the current urgent care benefits created under the VA MISSION Act that include maximum flexibility for a veteran to receive care at any in-network facility without pre-authorization from the VA. This bill will remove the barriers many veterans face in accessing care closer to home or at higher quality facilities in their local communities by removing the current requirement to receive pre-authorization from the VA. Four years after enactment, the pilot program would be expanded permanently nationwide.

CVA supports this legislation that will honor the sacrifices made by veterans and empower them with greater choice and flexibility to access health care in their local community. This approach to expanding choice for veterans is a solution to meet the changing needs of today and tomorrow's veterans.

Sincerely,

Russ Duerstine
Deputy Director
Concerned Veterans for America