



May 17, 2022

Letter of support for the Guaranteeing Healthcare Access to Personnel Who Served Act

Dear Members of Congress,

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 S.1863/H.R. 4624, the Guaranteeing Healthcare Access to Personnel Who Served Act (GHAPS Act), offered by Senator Jerry Moran and Congressman Mike Bost to clarify access standards, pilot self-scheduling for community care, examine rural and telehealth delivery, and require the VA to publish wait times.

The VA MISSION Act transformed health care options for the millions of veterans who utilize the VA health care system. It provided overdue flexibility for veterans to get care when and where they wanted. However, after the pandemic hit, we saw the VA limiting access to community care and too often veterans were left on long wait lists unable to access care. The GHAPS Act will provide much needed updates and reforms to VA health care delivery to improve outcomes for our veterans.

CVA strongly supports the passage of the GHAPS Act. The bill includes the following provisions:

- **Access to Community Care.** The VA MISSION Act gave the VA flexibility to establish access standards for community care through the regulatory process, however, this legislation will codify the standards. With the GHAPS Act, veterans will know community care access is here to stay.
- **Wait Time Transparency.** The bill requires the VA to publish the average wait times for a veteran to schedule an appointment at each VA medical center based on the date of request. Requiring this information to be publicly accessible will equip veterans to know if they are eligible for community care based on the access standards.
- **Pilot Community Care Self-Scheduling.** The bill pilots self-scheduling for veterans to access local providers. This is a commonsense reform that is already available for most in the private sector and veterans should have that same ease of access.
- **Create Telehealth Strategic Plan.** For many veterans, telehealth improves access and has the potential to transform health care delivery for decades to come. This bill requires the VA to do a comprehensive study of telehealth which will give policymakers and the VA vital information to inform further expansion and utilization of telehealth, particularly for rural veterans.

Better access to care must continue to be a priority for the VA. This legislation gives the VA additional tools to prioritize access to high quality care, particularly for those veterans who don't reside near a VA facility or in rural areas. CVA urges Congress to pass the GHAPS Act and President Biden to sign it into law.

Sincerely,

Russ Duerstine
Deputy Director
Concerned Veterans for America