

Wounded Warrior Project Advises Congress on Veterans Mental Health and Other Bills

WASHINGTON, May 22, 2019 /[PRNewswire](#)/ -- Wounded Warrior Project® (WWP) testified before the Senate Committee on Veteran's Affairs on bills relating to mental health, education assistance, quality of care for veterans, services for female veterans, improvements to access and care, website accessibility, electronic health records modernizations, and more. WWP vice president of independence services and mental health, Lt. Col. (Ret.) Michael Richardson spoke on behalf of the veteran service organization.

"Suicide prevention is VA's top clinical priority, and similarly, Wounded Warrior Project's largest program investment is in mental and brain health," said Richardson. "No one organization – and no single agency – can fully meet veterans' needs. We believe that mental health treatment works and that we will find the best results by embracing an integrated and comprehensive public health approach focused on resilience and prevention. It will take a combination of clinical, non-clinical, and peer-to-peer community-focused efforts to start making a meaningful impact in our collective pursuits. We need to prevent veteran suicide, normalize the conversation about seeking mental health care, and help veterans not just survive, but thrive in their communities by helping them create lives worth living."

WWP identified its support for the following [veteran policy bills](#), discussed before the committee:

- **S. 221 — Department of Veterans Affairs Provider Accountability Act**
- **S. 318 — VA Newborn Emergency Treatment Act**
- **S. 450 — Veterans Improved Access and Care Act of 2019**
- **S. 524 — Department of Veterans Affairs Tribal Advisory Committee Act of 2019**
- **S. 711 — Care and Readiness Enhancement (CARE) for Reservists Act of 2019**
- **S. 746 — Department of Veterans Affairs Website Accessibility Act of 2019**
- **S. 805 — Veteran Debt Fairness Act of 2019**
- **S. 857 — A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to increase the amount of special pension for Medal of Honor recipients, and for other purposes**
- **S. 1154 — Department of Veterans Affairs Electronic Health Record Advisory Committee Act**

WWP specifically highlighted **S. 785 — Commander John Scott Hannon Veterans Mental Health Care Improvement Act of 2019**. Suicide prevention is among the greatest challenges WWP addresses in the community we serve. Congress plays an important role in improving access to mental health care and supporting development of a comprehensive network of education and support that can protect against isolation and veteran suicide.

WWP encourages a wide-ranging approach anchored in evidence-based treatment and research. This foundation should support private and non-profit sector partnerships that keep VA at the center of care and strengthen holistic approaches to wellness. This bill contains 35 provisions that span from transition to community grants and incorporate proposals affecting clinical care and non-clinical support. Essentially, it will:

- Improve access to care following veterans' transition from active duty,
- Increase collaboration with community stakeholders, and
- Increase mental health research.

Given the immense importance of improving access to care and preventing veteran suicide, WWP believes it is critical to move forward collectively and more effectively toward legislative solutions that unite our community's efforts.

WWP also identified its conditional support for the following bills, with recommendations and suggested revisions:

- **S. 514 — Deborah Sampson Act**

WWP supports S. 514; however, we support a review of current VA initiatives for female veterans to ensure the necessity of new legislation. Additionally, we wish to bring attention to Section 502, which requires VA to submit a report to Congress on the availability of prosthetics made for women veterans, including an assessment of the availability of such prosthetics at each VA medical facility. Although well-intentioned, this section is extremely broad and may not be specific enough to meet congressional intent.

- **S. 123 — Ensuring Quality Care for Our Veterans Act**

WWP supports the intent of S. 123 and recommends VA submit a report to Congress providing the results of the original review. For VA providers found to have practiced with a revoked license, WWP supports a third-party clinical review to ensure veterans seen by these providers did not receive substandard care.

- **S. 980 — Homeless Veterans Prevention Act of 2019**

WWP supports S. 980 with annotated amendments.

- **S. 1101 — Better Examiner Standards and Transparency for Veterans Act of 2019**

WWP agrees with the provisions in the legislation that relates to closing this loophole and supports S. 1101.

To read WWP's full testimony before the Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs, including more details regarding its positions on the bills discussed during the hearing, visit

<https://www.woundedwarriorproject.org/media/183229/wwp-testimony-for-may-22-hearing-on-pending-legislation.pdf>. And to learn more about how WWP works with our nation's leaders to improve the lives of wounded veterans and their families, visit <https://newsroom.woundedwarriorproject.org/>.

About Wounded Warrior Project

Since 2003, Wounded Warrior Project® (WWP) has been meeting the growing needs of warriors, their families, and caregivers – helping them achieve their highest ambition. Learn more: <http://newsroom.woundedwarriorproject.org/about-us>.

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