



Easter Seals

Office of Public Affairs
1425 K Street, N.W.
Suite 200
Washington, DC 20005
202.347.3066 phone
202.347.7385 tty
202.737.7914 fax
www.easterseals.com

February 4, 2014

The Honorable Bernie Sanders
Chairman
Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs
412 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Sanders:

I am writing to offer Easter Seals' support of your Comprehensive Veterans Health and Benefits and Military Retirement Pay Restoration Act of 2014 (S. 1950), particularly the bill's expansion of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) comprehensive caregiver assistance program and the provisions to increase veterans' access to community-based services and supports.

Easter Seals and our national network of affiliates are helping to address the needs of veterans and military families through essential community-based programs. Easter Seals launched its Military and Veterans Initiative to address serious gaps in services to veterans and military families by mobilizing its provider network which includes more than 550 service locations across the United States. At these locations, Easter Seals provides veterans, military families and others with transition, mental health, employment, caregiving, respite, care coordination, assistive technology, and recreational services.

Easter Seals is pleased that you included the Committee-passed Caregivers Expansion and Improvement Act (S. 851) into your comprehensive veterans' bill. As you know, Easter Seals was selected by the VA in 2011 to provide the in-person, online and workbook training for caregivers of eligible veterans. Easter Seals has seen the positive impact the training and other assistance has had on these wounded warriors and their families. That is why we endorsed S. 851 and your efforts to expand the comprehensive caregiver assistance to veterans of all eras who incurred a serious injury in the line of duty.

In addition, Easter Seals is pleased that S. 1950 includes several provisions aimed at increasing community-based services and supports for veterans and their families. In particular, we support Section 313 to extend the pilot program that provides community-based residential rehabilitative care to veterans with traumatic brain injury; Section 342 to require the VA to contract with outside providers to establish a program of supportive services to family members and caregivers of veterans suffering with mental

illness; and Section 701 to increase awareness of veterans' benefits through expansion of public-private outreach efforts. Finally, we are pleased that S. 1950 would provide advanced appropriations for VA mandatory accounts to prevent gaps in veterans' benefits and services.

Thank you again for your leadership in addressing the needs of America's veterans through increased and effective services and supports. Please do not hesitate to call on Easter Seals and our affiliate network for assistance in getting your comprehensive legislation approved through Congress.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Katy Beh Neas". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Katy Beh Neas
Senior Vice President, Government Relations