



a program of United Spinal Association

January 17, 2014

The Honorable Bernie Sanders
Chairman
Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Sanders:

VetsFirst, a program of United Spinal Association, is writing to express our strong support for the Comprehensive Veterans Health and Benefits and Military Retirement Pay Restoration Act of 2014 (S. 1950). This robust legislation will provide needed benefits and supports for veterans living with disabilities and their caregivers.

Veterans living with significant disabilities often depend on the tireless support of their caregivers. Many family caregivers have sacrificed for decades to provide that care. To assist these caregivers, this legislation would expand eligibility for the Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA's) enhanced caregiver program to include caregivers of certain veterans who were injured before September 11, 2001. This change will ensure caregivers have the supports that recognize their sacrifice and allow them to continue to provide the care that helps disabled veterans remain independent.

In addition, this legislation will also assist those disabled veterans who struggle to make it to needed VA appointments because they lack accessible transportation. Veterans who do not have a network of family or friends who can drive them to appointments, or who live in areas without public transportation or widespread assistance from volunteer organizations, need options. To address these needs, this legislation will allow VA to continue to provide transportation to and from VA facilities in connection with rehabilitation, counseling, examination, treatment, and care.

Furthermore, this legislation also takes important steps toward assisting veterans in holistically addressing infertility. For many veterans, the ability to start or grow their families represents an important part of moving forward with their lives. This legislation adds fertility counseling and treatment, including treatment using assisted reproductive technology to the definition of medical services and expands availability for these services to include veterans' spouses or surrogates. It also provides financial assistance for veterans who choose to grow their families through adoption.

We thank you for your commitment to our nation's veterans. If you have any questions or we can be of further assistance, please contact Christopher Neiweem, Director of Veterans Policy, (202) 556-2076, ext. 7703 or by email at cneiweem@vetsfirst.org.

Sincerely,

Heather L. Ansley, Esq., MSW
Vice President
VetsFirst, a program of United Spinal Association

