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February 11, 2026

The Honorable Doug Collins
Secretary of Veterans Affairs
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Secretary Collins,

In 2021, Congress passed the Deborah Sampson Act (Section V of Public Law 116-315), which called for Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Vet Centers to provide women-only group retreat offerings to women veterans. For years, Vet Center retreats have helped veterans reduce PTSD and trauma-related distress, improve their mental well-being and assist with their reintegration into civilian life. Women veterans are often more comfortable receiving care and services in women-only settings, and ensuring the Department is providing women-only retreats is integral to ensuring they can receive the care and assistance they have earned.

Based on VA's own data, it only held six women-only Vet Center retreats in 2024 with a total of 110 participants. In 2025, it only held five women-only retreats with a total of ninety-three participants. Since the 1,200-participant cap expired in fiscal year 2025, VA has the opportunity to more robustly recruit, advertise, and accommodate as many veterans as possible in these programs, including women veterans. Additionally, while some women veterans have been able to benefit from these retreats, those who use wheelchairs or have other medical needs thus far been unable to do so. Accommodating these individuals and ensuring these retreats are more inclusive to the disabled veteran population will require more resources. I therefore request VA do the following:

1. Review all requests for group retreats provided through Vet Centers and determine whether current group retreat programming meets veteran demand, specifically requests for women only retreats and those with disabilities requiring appropriate accommodations.
2. Use this information to provide a plan of how to maximize marketing, recruiting, and maintaining women and disabled veteran attendance at retreats.

Expanding access to this beneficial program is vital for us to continue to do our work of serving veterans effectively. Thank you in advance for your attention to this matter. And I look forward to your timely response.

Sincerely,



Richard Blumenthal
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs