

Chairman Moran, Ranking Member Blumenthal, and Members of the Committee — thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today.

My name is Gabriel George, a Texas native who served honorably in the U.S. Navy for five years. On April 1, 2008, my life changed forever when I was declared dead at the scene of a motorcycle accident while on duty in Jacksonville, Florida. I was left with a traumatic brain injury, spinal cord injury, and a paralyzed right arm. After ten years of living in pain and isolation, I took part in a VA Summer Sports Clinic that brought me back to life. Although I never regained the use of my arm and ultimately chose to amputate in 2020, the VA events and staff reignited my desire to live to my fullest and inspire other disabled veterans struggling to find their way. Today, my life centers around raising my seventeen-year-old daughter, Jameah, and the world of adaptive sports.

I represent Military Adaptive Court Sports, MACS, a national nonprofit providing adaptive pickleball, racquetball, badminton, and padel programming for wounded, ill, and injured veterans and their families.

I am here because adaptive court sports are not recreation. They are neuromotor, physical, and social rehabilitation disguised as sport. Every day, veterans with amputations, traumatic brain injury, PTSD, stroke, spinal cord injuries, and severe musculoskeletal trauma are being asked to relearn how to move, balance, react, and trust their bodies again.

Court sports train exactly those systems: hand-eye coordination, lateral movement, rapid decision-making, proprioception, and functional strength — in an environment that is motivating, competitive, and peer-supported.

And just as importantly, they restore something the VA cannot prescribe: belonging.

Yet today, tens of thousands of veterans who could benefit from adaptive sports never receive access — not because the VA doesn't care, but because of how the current system is structured.

The VA's Adaptive Sports Grant Program and the Veterans Monthly Assistance Allowance have done extraordinary work supporting elite and emerging adaptive athletes. But those programs are largely designed around national competitions and high-performance training pathways.

That leaves behind the majority of veterans who will never become Paralympians — but who desperately need weekly, community-based adaptive sport to manage pain, prevent decline, and stay socially connected.

That gap is where organizations like Military Adaptive Court Sports operate.

MACS runs six-week adaptive sports clinics inside VA facilities and community sites across the country. We serve veterans with a wide range of disabilities — including those with complex conditions who are often excluded from traditional sports models. We integrate multiple court sports, peer mentorship, and family participation, because recovery does not happen in isolation.

Most importantly, we do not guess at impact — we measure it. We collect pre- and post-program data on pain, mobility, confidence, isolation, and physical function. Veterans consistently report reduced pain, increased activity, and improved mental health after participating. These are not one-off success stories — they are repeatable outcomes.

And we do this at a fraction of the cost of many traditional adaptive sports programs. One court, one instructor, and a small set of adaptive equipment can serve dozens of veterans every week, year-round, indoors, in almost every American community. Pickleball, racquetball, and badminton are already present in VA facilities, YMCAs, recreation centers, and military bases nationwide.

Court sports are one of the highest-return investments the VA can make in adaptive rehabilitation. But today, they remain underrepresented in VA funding structures.

As Congress reviews the impact of VA Adaptive Sports Grants and the Veterans Monthly Assistance Allowance, we respectfully ask the Committee to ensure these programs

explicitly support community-based, therapeutic adaptive sports — not just elite competition and national events.

Military Adaptive Court Sports stands ready to partner with the Department of Veterans Affairs to expand this model nationwide — to reach the veterans who are currently falling through the cracks — and to deliver rehabilitation that is affordable, scalable, and proven.

In addition to my work with MACS, I am proud to serve as an ambassador for the Will of Iron Golf Foundation for Military Vets. This small but passionate organization is dedicated to opening doors and sharing the mental health benefits of golf with veterans, their spouses, and children. My daughter and I are among the 280 beneficiaries who have received golf clubs, private lessons, and the opportunity to participate in numerous golf events free of cost.

When I say small organization, I mean it in every sense. The two founders are the entire staff. For six years, they have volunteered their time and resources out of deep gratitude and love for military families. Yet, like many small nonprofits, the Will of Iron faces constant challenges in securing funding, largely because they don't have the manpower to navigate a lengthy and demanding VA grants process.

I urge this committee to use your influence and reach to help create additional funding opportunities for small nonprofits like the Will of Iron Golf Foundation and MACS, which face the same challenge when the VA grants is exhausted in the calendar year.

Your support could make all the difference, ensuring that organizations with heart and proven impact can continue to serve veterans and their families without being overwhelmed by administrative barriers. Please consider advocating for changes that make it easier for these vital organizations to access the resources they need to thrive.

Thank you for your leadership on behalf of America's veterans. I look forward to your questions.