

**MARK KIRK-IL**

**June 3, 2015**

Testimony before the Veterans Affairs Committee  
S. 297 Frontlines to Lifelines

Senator Mark Kirk (IL)  
June 3, 2015

Thank you for allowing me to testify today on behalf of my bill S. 297, Frontlines to Lifelines. I wrote this legislation with the idea that the best healthcare providers for veterans are veterans themselves. The Veterans Administration (VA) recently identified a need for over 26,000 health care providers. Frontlines to Lifelines addresses the need for these additional providers while also creating a “doctor buddy system” by hiring combat medics, medical technicians, and corpsman straight from active duty service, without additional certification or schooling, to care for veterans as Intermediate Care Technicians (ICT)—similar to EMTs.

In January, I introduced S. 297 which expands this highly successful VA pilot program for 3 more years and increases the initial number of positions from 45 to 250. This helps meet the VA’s healthcare provider shortage and provides jobs to highly qualified veterans

I had the pleasure of meeting Joe Carney, a combat medic turned ICT at Lovell FHCC in North Chicago. Mr. Carney is an Army veteran who enlisted right after September 11<sup>th</sup> and served 4 tours in Iraq and Afghanistan. Mr. Carney told me that the ICT program allows him to provide care for his fellow veterans on both medical and personal levels. He also told me that “Immediately a patient sees my veteran badge and knows they are in good hands, they often call me ‘Doc,’ a title on the battlefield that is not given but earned among fellow soldiers.”

I am committed to ensuring our veterans receive the care they deserve from our VA hospitals and care providers, and are presented with job opportunities when they have completed their service. I believe that Frontlines to Lifelines achieves this objective and enhances care for our veterans.

Thank you.