

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

September 18, 2015

The Honorable Jeff Miller
Chairman
House Veterans' Affairs Committee
335 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Corrine Brown
Ranking Member
House Veterans' Affairs Committee
333 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Miller and Ranking Member Brown,

We thank you for your leadership on improving access to healthcare for our nations' veterans, and we write to request that the Committee on Veterans' Affairs include reauthorization of the VA Child Care Pilot program in any legislative package to extend Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) programs or authorities set to expire in 2015.

As you know, the VA Child Care Pilot program was authorized through the *Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act of 2010* to provide assistance to qualified veterans for child care expenses incurred while receiving care at Veterans Health Administration (VHA) medical facilities. In the 113th Congress, the program was reauthorized through the Department of Veterans Affairs Expiring Authorities Act of 2013. Unless Congress acts, authorization for the program will expire on December 31, 2015.

The pilot program is currently operating at four VA Medical Centers in New York, Washington, and Texas, and had served 10,423 children by the end of FY2014. Allowing the program to lapse would harm thousands of veteran families who rely on this crucial service. For example, since its establishment in October 2011, Kids Korner at the Buffalo VA Medical Center has assisted over 363 western New York families. Kids Korner has aided veterans seeking treatment for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) by removing the anxiety and stress of finding quality child care. Treatment for PTSD requires regular counseling and recurring follow up; on-site child care has helped veterans keep doctors' appointments.

The men and women who have served our country in uniform deserve access to the best quality, most affordable health care. Yet for many veterans with children, especially women, the lack of access to child care is a major barrier to using VA healthcare. In fact, 44% of the veterans who use the program are mothers or stepmothers. During the Committee's hearing on the state of VA healthcare and services for women veterans on April 30, 2015, Disabled American Veterans urged Congress to make the VA Child Care Pilot program permanent. The American Legion has also endorsed legislation, the *Veterans' Access to Child Care Act*, to make the program permanent.

We appreciate your commitment to serving our nation's veterans. As the number of women veterans using VA healthcare continues to grow, programs like the VA Child Care Pilot will play an essential role in ensuring equal access to the VA system. In the near-term, it is our hope that the pilot program can be extended. Long-

term, we urge the Committee to expand and make this program a permanent part of VA services.

Thank you for your consideration of our request.

Sincerely,



JULIA BROWNLEY



BRIAN HIGGINS



TOM REED



STEVE ISRAEL



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MARK TAKANO



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