

The Honorable Mike Levin
U.S. House of Representatives
1030 Longworth Office Building
Washington, D.C., 20515

October 15, 2021

Dear Chairman Levin,

The Veterans Education Project (VEP) is a nonprofit, Veteran Service Organization that aims to highlight innovation within higher education, and to support veteran and military students. As veterans serving veterans, the Veterans Education Project is committed to nonpartisan research, engagement, and policy implementation in our efforts to support institutions that meet the needs of student veterans, and guarantee the benefits and support systems necessary for veteran and military students to succeed. As such, on behalf of our members, VEP is proud to support H.R. 4601, the *Commitment to Veteran Support and Outreach (CVSO) Act*.

Unfortunately, many veterans do not utilize the benefits they have earned because they are unaware or unable. Out of 19 million veterans in the United States, only about nine million are enrolled in VA health care, five million receive disability compensation, and three million are active VA home loan participants—with other VA programs showing similar rates of underutilization.

Local populations depend heavily on County Veteran Service Officers (CVSOs) to spread awareness and enroll veterans in VA programs, including VHA systems. The services that CVSOs provide to veterans are critical for increasing veteran participation in the benefits they rightfully earned, while encouraging their integration into communities and participation in VHA services – all incredibly important in the fight against veteran death by suicide.

However, these critical CVSOs are vastly underfunded and unable to fulfill their mission to assist our nation's veterans. H.R. 4601 addresses these gaps in service by providing the necessary funding mechanisms to ensure CVSOs are up to the task and able to fulfill their service. This important legislation will greatly increase the efficiency of case work at VA, while increasing our outreach to vulnerable or underserved veteran populations.

It is our pleasure to support H.R. 4601, the *Commitment to Veteran Support and Outreach (CVSO) Act*, and we look forward to working together to advance this critical legislation.

Sincerely,



Stephen Patterson
Executive Director
Veterans Education Project