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U.S. House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

ONE HUNDRED SIXTEENTH CONGRESS

B-234 LONGWORTH HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

WASHINGTON, DC 20515

<http://veterans.house.gov>

August 18, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
H-232, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20215

The Honorable Steny Hoyer
Majority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
H-107, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20215

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Majority Leader Hoyer:

I write to urge you to act to prevent veteran suicide by scheduling S. 785, as amended, the Commander John Scott Hannon Veterans Mental Health Care Improvement Act of 2019, for consideration when the House reconvenes in the coming days.

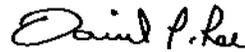
I know that you share my deep grief in the tragic loss of twenty servicemembers and veterans to suicide every day and agree that preventing that loss should be one of our highest priorities. That is why Chairman Takano and I made suicide prevention the primary goal of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs this Congress. Our joint commitment to preventing veteran suicide and improving veteran mental health is reflected in the growing number of Committee roundtables, hearings, and legislation, much of which is reflected in the bipartisan provisions of S. 785.

S. 785 would create a stronger system of support for veterans at-risk of suicide within the Department of Veterans Affairs and through communities of care across the country. It is sponsored by Chairman Moran and Ranking Member Tester of the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs and passed the Senate with unanimous support earlier this month. The bill is also strongly supported by veteran service organizations. In fact, four of the largest veterans service organizations – the Disabled American Veterans, the Paralyzed Veterans of America, The American Legion, and the Veterans of Foreign Wars – wrote to Chairman Takano and me last week calling on Congress to “act swiftly and pass, without delay, S. 785.” Just yesterday, thirty of the largest veteran community collaboratives and direct service providers wrote to urge, “all members of Congress to seize this historic opportunity to improve the lives of veterans, their families, and caregivers by empowering communities to reduce veteran suicide.” I echo their call in the strongest possible terms.

The COVID-19 pandemic has only increased concerns about the mental health and wellness of our nation's veterans and made the need for timely action to save their lives more acute. Every day we fail to act is another day in which twenty of the brave men and women who have served our country in uniform will lose their battle against suicide and self-harm. On their behalf, I hope that you will add S. 785 to the House Floor calendar at the earliest opportunity.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this urgent request and for your ongoing dedication to veterans and their families. Should you have any questions, please contact Jon Towers, Republican Staff Director, at (202) 225-3527.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David P. Roe". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

David P. Roe, M.D.
Ranking Member

CC: The Honorable Kevin McCarthy, Republican Leader
The Honorable Mark Takano, Chairman, Committee on Veterans' Affairs

Enclosure: August 13, 2020, letter from the Disabled American Veterans, the Paralyzed Veterans of America, The American Legion, and the Veterans of Foreign Wars and August 17, 2020, letter from 30 veteran community collaboratives and direct service providers urging House passage of S. 785.