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COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

ONE HUNDRED SEVENTEENTH CONGRESS

364 CANNON HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

WASHINGTON, DC 20515

<http://veterans.house.gov>

September 8, 2021

The Honorable Mark Takano
 Chairman, Committee on Veterans' Affairs
 364 Cannon House Office Building
 Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Takano:

I write to urge you to postpone the markup scheduled for September 13th in light of the serious impact the crisis in Afghanistan is having on veterans and Gold Star Families.

I know you share my deep reverence for the veterans who served in Afghanistan and the families of those who lost loved ones there over the last 20 years. The humanitarian, foreign policy, and national security crisis in Afghanistan that resulted in the tragic loss of 13 servicemembers has added to the heavy burden those veterans and families carry. It has left many veterans and survivors questioning whether their sacrifices were in vain and reliving painful memories. The toll that has taken on them can be seen at the Veterans Crisis Line, where calls increased 7 percent, chats increased 40 percent, and texts almost doubled between August 13th to August 29th. I fear that alarming trend will continue, and perhaps worsen, particularly as we learn more about the hundreds of Americans and allies that were left behind.

Our Committee should have no higher priority in this moment than supporting the veterans and families who are struggling as the result of the failure in Afghanistan and ensuring that they have every resource they need to heal and move forward. That is why several of my Republican colleagues and I have requested a hearing on the impact of the Afghanistan crisis on the veteran community. To-date, our request has gone unanswered. Instead, our Committee is scheduled to markup prohibitively expensive, politically-motivated, and economically-fraught reconciliation legislation on September 13th.

On behalf of veterans and families in need, I respectfully request that you use the time currently scheduled for that markup to focus on what is clearly a more pressing matter with life and death consequences to the veteran community – the crisis in Afghanistan.

Sincerely,

Mike Bost
 Ranking Member