



September 27, 2023

The Honorable Bob Casey
United States Senate
393 Russel Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Rick Scott
United States Senate
110 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington DC 20510

Dear Senator Casey and Senator Scott,

The undersigned organizations of the Consortium for Constituents with Disabilities (CCD) write to thank you for your championship and introduction of S.2516, the Veterans Accessibility Act of 2023.

CCD is the largest coalition of national organizations working together to advocate for federal public policy that ensures the self-determination, independence, empowerment, integration and inclusion of children and adults with disabilities in all aspects of society free from racism, ableism, sexism, and xenophobia, as well as LGBTQ+ based discrimination and religious intolerance.

The CCD Veterans Task Force concerns itself with issues that impact veterans with disabilities as people with disabilities and seeks to inform the broader community of disability stakeholders and policymakers about matters of concern to America's disabled veterans.

Despite existing laws, veterans with disabilities consistently face access barriers to programs, services, and health care offered by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). This bill addresses technological barriers such as in-person kiosks, virtual portals, and even the VA website, which have historically been, and continue to remain inaccessible. Additionally, there are still physical barriers for veterans with mobility limitations that range from inaccessible medical equipment to exam rooms that are too small for wheelchair users to access. According to the 2022 VA Annual Benefits Report, more than 2.5 million veterans enrolled in VA health care have a service-connected rating of 70% or higher, meaning many of our nation's veterans may encounter a range of barriers when accessing VA.

We are appreciative of the bill's pledge to accountability and transparency; the establishment of a committee to advise the Secretary on access barriers for veterans with disabilities; and for ensuring overall compliance with existing laws such as the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

Thank you for your commitment to accessibility for all veterans with disabilities. Should you have questions, please reach out to Stephanie Flynt at stephanie.flynt@ndrn.org or Julie Howell at JulieH@pva.org.

Sincerely,

- American Music Therapy Association
- American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA)
- American Therapeutic Recreation Association
- Eggleston
- Epilepsy Foundation
- National Disability Rights Network (NDRN)
- National Organization of Social Security Claimants Representatives (NOSSCR)
- Paralyzed Veterans of America
- SourceAmerica
- United Spinal Association
- United States International Council on Disabilities
- World Institute on Disability