

December 12, 2025

The Honorable John Thune  
Majority Leader  
United States Senate  
511 Dirksen Senate Office  
Building Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer  
Minority Leader  
United States Senate  
322 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Majority Leader Thune and Minority Leader Schumer,

We, the undersigned organizations, are writing to express our support for the *Non-Opioids Prevent Addiction in the Nation (“NOPAIN”)* for Veterans Act, S. 3209, introduced by Senators Shelley Moore Capito (R-WV), Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH), Katie Britt (R-AL), Catherine Cortez-Masto (D-NV), Kevin Cramer (R-ND), Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY), Bill Hagerty (R-TN), John Hoeven (R-ND), Jim Justice (R-WV), Tim Kaine (D-VA), Mark Kelly (D-AZ), Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), Pete Ricketts (R-NE), Jacky Rosen (D-NV), Tim Scott (R-SC), and Chris Van Hollen (D-MD).

Currently, too many Americans with Veterans Affairs’ health benefits lack access to many FDA-approved, safe, and effective non-opioid approaches because of overly restrictive practices of the Veterans’ Affairs National Formulary (“VANF”). The small number of non-opioids on the VANF, and the onerous process for accessing non-opioids not on the formulary, create complicated barriers. Unfortunately, this leaves VA patients with little choice in managing their acute pain and many are steered towards prescription opioid pills, which carry with them certain risks, including misuse, abuse, dependence, and addiction.

Following the passage of the *NOPAIN Act* in 2022, Medicare now pays separately for a host of non-opioids – making them more accessible than ever for patients undergoing an outpatient surgical procedure. Unfortunately, the VANF currently only makes a small handful of such approaches accessible to VA beneficiaries, creating a two-tiered system.

Through coordinated action and hard work by government agencies, healthcare providers, advocacy organizations, Congress, state governments, and others, we are seeing a concerted effort to reduce excessive opioid prescribing in the United States. While we know that the VA is committed to doing the same, the agency’s own practices limit their ability to optimize patient choice. By refusing to cover a variety of non-opioid options, clinicians may need to rely on prescription opioids, leading to unnecessary persistent opioid use among VA patients. In some instances, it may result in addiction, overdose, or even death.

We believe it is especially important to work to prevent opioid addiction in a community that faces unique risks for developing an opioid use disorder.

Drug overdose deaths among veterans are increasing. From 2010 to 2019, drug overdose mortality rates among veterans increased by 53 percent.<sup>1</sup> The VANF’s decision to limit options for non-opioids for acute pain exacerbates the unique challenges veterans face. Consider:

- Two-thirds of all U.S. veterans report experiencing pain following their deployments;

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<sup>1</sup> Annals of Medicine. U.S. Military veterans and the opioid overdose crisis: a review of risk factors and prevention efforts. July 2022.

- Nearly half report misusing prescription opioids; and <sup>2 3</sup>
- In 2020, 2.4 million, or 12 percent, of our veterans reported having a substance use disorder, with approximately 500,000 of them opioid-related.<sup>4</sup>

Veterans also experience high rates of mental health disorders such as depression, anxiety, suicidality, and post-traumatic stress disorder, often using opioids or other substances to cope with emotional pain. Unfortunately, this increases the likelihood that some may progress to illicit drugs, such as heroin, fentanyl or other controlled substances.<sup>5</sup>

**As a result, it is critically important that we give clinicians more options to manage our veteran's acute pain, including non-addictive approaches, to minimize unnecessary exposure to opioids.**

The *NOPAIN for Veterans Act* will require the VA to add all FDA-approved non-opioid acute pain management approaches to the VANF. This legislation will facilitate choice in how VA beneficiaries manage their postsurgical pain, reduce rates of opioid abuse, misuse, dependence, and addiction occurring postsurgically, and save lives.

We believe the men and women who serve our country as part of our Armed Services deserve the best of us. This includes setting them up for success after their service. In honor of the sacrifices these brave men and women have made on behalf of our country, we have a duty and a responsibility to ensure they receive the best health benefits we can provide. This includes ensuring they can access the full range of non-opioid analgesic products after surgery.

**Accordingly, we implore Congress to swiftly pass the *NOPAIN for Veterans Act*.**

Thank you for your time and attention to this urgent matter.

Sincerely,

A Better Life - Brianna's Hope

A Voice in the Wilderness Empowerment Center

Ambulatory Surgery Center Association

American Association of Colleges of Nursing

American Association of Orthopaedic Surgeons

American Freedom Consulting LLC

ARMOUR Families

Asheville Equine Therapy

Better Together CT Inc.

Braach Shepards 4 Veterans

CARE Dallas

Center for Suicide Awareness

<sup>2</sup> National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA). Substance Use and Military Life DrugFacts. October 2019.

<sup>3</sup> Kelley ML, Bravo AJ, Votaw VR, Stein E, Redman JC, Witkiewitz K. Opioid and sedative misuse among veterans wounded in combat. *Addict Behav.* 2019 May;92:168-172. doi: 10.1016/j.addbeh.2018.12.007. Epub 2018 Dec 10. PMID: 30640149; PMCID: PMC10617000.

<sup>4</sup> Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, “2020 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: Veterans.” July 27, 2022. Available online: <https://www.samhsa.gov/data/report/2020-nsduh-veterans>.

<sup>5</sup> Addiction. Non-medical use of prescription opioids is associated with heroin initiation among US veterans: a prospective cohort study. August 2016.

CJ3 Foundation  
Braach Shepards 4 Veterans  
CARE Dallas  
Center for Suicide Awareness  
CJ3 Foundation  
Coalition for Behavioral Health  
Confidential Recovery  
Country Doc Walk-in & Wellness, LLC  
Country Wellness, LLC  
Danny's Ride  
Dr. Stefana Pecher, LLC  
El Rancho De La Vida Inc.  
Endeavor Therapeutic Horsemanship  
Equine Escape  
Erase PTSD Now  
Facing Fentanyl  
Fire Mission Ministries  
Fleet Reserve Association  
Fox Valley Warrior Aid Alliance  
Freedom Through Recovery  
Frontline Healing Foundation  
Gateway Meadows Equine-Assisted Services  
Goldfinch Health  
Great Lakes Dryhootch  
Healing on the Fly  
Help Our Heroes  
Heroin Epidemic Relief Organization  
Heroes Helping Heroes 4 Life  
Heroes' Movement  
Herren Project  
Ho'ola Farms  
H.O.P.E. Haven  
Hope Lives  
Hope Street  
HVAF of Indiana, Inc.  
Illinois Association of County Veterans Assistance Commissions  
Infinite Hero Foundation  
InStep, Inc.  
Iron Tribe Network  
Jake's Reach  
Journey House Foundation  
K9 Camo Companions  
Latino Recovery Advocacy  
Lite Recovery Hub  
Marissa's Voice Inc.  
Mental Health Association of Rhode Island  
Michigan Women Veterans Empowerment  
Montachusett Veterans Outreach Center  
National Association of County Veterans Service Officers  
National Coalition for Patriots  
National Guard Association of the United States  
National Transitions of Care Coalition

New Earth Recovery  
New Jerusalem Missions  
Non Commissioned Officers Association  
Nurses Organization of Veterans Affairs  
Oklahoma CART Association  
Open Doors to Future Possibilities  
Opioid Solutions Legacy  
Operation First Response, Inc  
Overdose Lifeline  
PAACA Recovery Support Center  
Paralyzed Veterans of America  
Prevention Action Alliance  
Prevention Alliance of Tennessee  
Project Restore Hope  
PTSD Awareness Summit  
Quest 4 Recovery Network Inc  
REAL LIFE  
Recovery Mobile Clinic  
Safe Haven Recovery Engagement Center  
Sanctuary Foundation for Veterans  
Setbacks to Comebacks  
She Recovers Foundation  
Society for Opioid Free Anesthesia  
Tea and Cake Addiction Recovery  
Team Sharing, Inc.  
The Addict's Parents United  
The Battle Within  
The MOSAIC Foundation  
The Veteran Mentor Project Inc  
The Warren Coalition  
Trauma and Resiliency Resources  
Twelfth Step Ministry, Inc.  
United Soldiers and Sailors of America  
United States Veterans Initiative  
Veteran Impact Services  
Veterans Assistance Commission of Lake County, Illinois  
Veterans National Recovery Center  
Veterans Network Association  
Veterans Outreach Center, Inc.  
Vietnam Veterans of America  
Voices for Awareness  
Voices for Non-Opioid Choices  
Will Bright Foundation  
Wisconsin Veterans Network  
Wyoming Valley Alcohol & Drug Services, Inc.  
Young People in Recovery