

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.¹ 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;

¹ 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 ^{2 3}
- 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.⁴

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.⁵

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

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

³ 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.

⁴ 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>.

⁵ 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