



**CONSORTIUM FOR CITIZENS
WITH DISABILITIES**

May 26, 2011

The Honorable Michael Grimm
512 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative Grimm:

We the undersigned members of the Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities (CCD) Veterans Task Force are writing in support of your substitute amendment to the Veterans Dog Training Therapy Act (H.R. 198). The proposed amendment to this legislation would ensure that accredited service dog agencies and trainers will provide appropriate training and consultation with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to provide opportunities for veterans with mental health needs to train service dogs for fellow veterans with disabilities.

CCD is a coalition of national consumer, service provider, and professional organizations which advocates on behalf of people with disabilities and chronic conditions and their families.

The members of the CCD Veterans Task Force support efforts to ensure that properly trained service animals are available to veterans who can benefit from their assistance. The Veterans Dog Training Therapy Act provides a unique opportunity to benefit not only veterans seeking the assistance of a service dog but also allow veterans with post-deployment mental health concerns or post-traumatic stress disorder the opportunity to experience benefits from participating in the training of these dogs.

Furthermore, requiring VA to work in conjunction with accredited service dog agencies and trainers will benefit all participating veterans. Veterans who assist with the training of the service dogs will benefit by learning the skills needed to ensure that the animals are properly trained. Because the service dogs will be properly trained, the veterans receiving these service dogs will be assured that the dogs are able to adequately and safely provide assistance.

Thank you for your continuing leadership on behalf of our nation's veterans. CCD and its Veterans Task Force are willing to assist in any way to serve veterans with disabilities. If you have any questions, please contact Heather Ansley, CCD Veterans Task Force Co-Chair, at (202) 556-2076, ext. 7702 or by e-mail at hansley@vetsfirst.org.

Sincerely,

American Association on Health and Disability
Easter Seals
Epilepsy Foundation
Mental Health America

National Association of County Behavioral Health and Developmental Disability Directors
National Association of State Head Injury Administrators
National Counsel for Community Behavioral Healthcare
National Disability Rights Network
National Industries for the Blind
National Rehabilitation Association
NISH
Paralyzed Veterans of America
VetsFirst, a program of United Spinal Association