



**CONSORTIUM FOR CITIZENS
WITH DISABILITIES**

July 22, 2020

The Honorable Patty Murray
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senator Murray:

The undersigned organizations of the Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities are writing in support of S. 319, the Women Veterans and Family Health Services Act of 2019. CCD is a coalition of national disability rights, advocates, consumer and provider organizations representing the nation's 61 million people with disabilities. Our organizations strive daily to ensure that people with disabilities are able to participate fully in their communities and to enjoy the richness of life afforded to all people in the United States.

For many people with disabilities, the ability to have a family is an important life goal. From 2001 to 2013, more than 1,300 service members sustained a genitourinary injury, resulting in the loss of, or compromised ability, to have a child. In September 2016, Congress provided temporary authorization for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to provide in-vitro fertilization (IVF) to veterans with severe service-connected conditions that prevent the conception of a child. Congress then passed legislation extending this benefit for two more years in 2018. This authorization is set to expire on September 30. Without the current authorization, veterans who lose reproductive ability due to a service-connected injury will once again bear the total cost for any medical services should they attempt to have children.

Congress has a moral obligation to restore to veterans what has been lost in service, to the fullest extent possible. Men and women who served should not have to rush to have a family because they are worried this program will be discontinued. The House and Senate collaborated in the past to authorize IVF. We ask that you do so again and let veterans better plan for their lives knowing this benefit will always be there for them. The continued provision of procreative services through VA would ensure that these veterans are able to have a full quality of life that would otherwise be denied to them as a result of their service.

Furthermore, we believe Congress should go a step further and make such services a permanent part of the medical benefits package at VA. S. 319, the "Women Veterans and Families Health Services Act of 2019," would make procreative services a

permanent part of the medical benefits package at VA. It would also address the needs of women veterans whose injuries prevent a full-term pregnancy.

We urge Congress to act quickly to restore to veterans what was lost in service, to the fullest extent possible.

Sincerely,

American Council of the Blind
Easterseals
National Disability Rights Network
National Health Law Program
Paralyzed Veterans of America
US International Council on Disabilities
VetsFirst