



**CONSORTIUM FOR CITIZENS
WITH DISABILITIES**

October 4, 2019

The Hon. Richard Shelby
Chairman
Appropriations Committee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Hon. Nita Lowey
Chairperson
Appropriations Committee
U. S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Hon. Patrick Leahy
Ranking Member
Appropriations Committee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Hon. Kay Granger
Ranking Member
Appropriations Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman, Madame Chair, Senator Leahy and Representative Granger:

The undersigned members of the Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities (CCD) Veterans Task Force and Employment and Training Task Force ask you to include in the final appropriations bill for the Department of Labor (DOL) provisions that would establish a Disabled Veterans Program staff position within the Veterans Employment and Training Service (VETS). CCD is a coalition of national disability rights, advocacy, consumer, provider and self-advocates organizations representing this nation's 61 million Americans with disabilities. Our task forces are particularly interested in ensuring employment opportunities for all individuals with disabilities, including veterans, and assuring their rights in the workforce and in all aspects of daily life.

Earlier this year, the House of Representatives included in the Labor-HHS-Education appropriations the sum of \$300,000 within DOL's Federal Administration to establish a Disabled Veteran Program (DVP) to address the high unemployment and low labor force participation rate of veterans with service-connected and non-service-connected disabilities. Modeled after VETS successful women's program, the DVP is intended to promote employment and advancement opportunities for veterans with disabilities by working with federal, state, and private partners to promote the hiring of veterans with disabilities, improve coordination of available employment services and supports, and to identify and share employment best practices for hiring, retaining, and advancing veterans with disabilities in the workforce.

Even as the overall employment picture for veterans has improved dramatically in recent years, the employment and labor force participation rates for veterans with significant disabilities continue to lag far behind. Numerous reports by agencies such

as DOL's Advisory Committee on Veterans' Employment, Training, and Employer Outreach (ACVETEO) and the Government Accountability Office (GAO) have recommended that VETS expand its supports for veterans with disabilities and improve coordination and technical assistance to state-based employment specialists who assist veterans with disabilities in finding employment.

We believe that this Disabled Veterans Program position within DOL VETS will ensure a stronger focus on the employment challenges faced by veterans with disabilities and urge you to include the House-passed provisions in the final appropriations agreement.

American Council of the Blind
American Foundation for the Blind
American Music Therapy Association
Blinded Veterans Association
Brain Injury Association of America
Easterseals
National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities
National Association of State Head Injury Administrators
National Disability Rights Network
National Industries for the Blind
Paralyzed Veterans of America
SourceAmerica
VetsFirst