

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

March 1, 2016

The Honorable Charlie Dent  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Military Construction,  
Veterans Affairs and Related Agencies  
HVC-227, The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Sanford Bishop  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Military Construction,  
Veterans Affairs and Related Agencies  
1016 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Dent and Ranking Member Bishop:

As you begin consideration of the Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill for Fiscal Year (FY) 2017, we ask that you support robust funding for the Veterans Crisis Line (VCL). This critical service is intended to provide 24-hour support for those veterans dealing with a mental health crisis, including those contemplating suicide. However, a recent report indicates that individuals have experienced great difficulty obtaining needed assistance through the VCL.

According to a recent report released by the Department of Veterans Affairs Office of Inspector General, individuals were often directed to backup crisis centers, which led directly to voicemail. The report also indicates that callers often did not receive immediate assistance, the VCL and backup centers did not provide adequate training to individuals staffing call centers, and that quality assurance provisions were insufficient. These findings are extremely disturbing, and it is unacceptable that veterans suffering with mental health conditions who seek help are not receiving it.

The Department of Veterans Affairs estimates that between 18 and 22 veterans commit suicide each day. While this Congress has passed critical legislation, like the Clay Hunt Suicide Prevention for American Veterans Act, to expand services to veterans in mental health crisis, existing programs must have the resources they need to provide critical assistance, and ensure the quality of the services they provide. It is our responsibility to ensure that services like the Veterans Crisis Line receive the funding needed to work effectively, and to be able to assist those who are in the most need.

We thank you for your attention to this request, and for your leadership throughout the FY 2017 appropriations process.

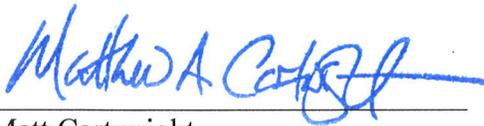
Sincerely,



David N. Cicilline  
Member of Congress



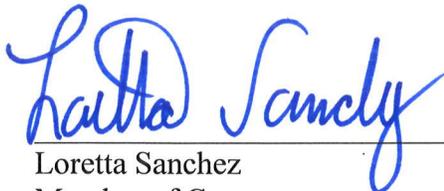
Brad Ashford  
Member of Congress



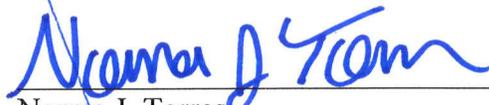
Matt Cartwright  
Member of Congress



John Yarmuth  
Member of Congress



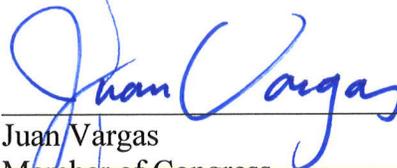
Loretta Sanchez  
Member of Congress



Norma J. Torres  
Member of Congress



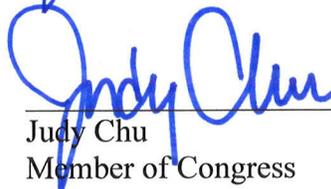
Steve Cohen  
Member of Congress



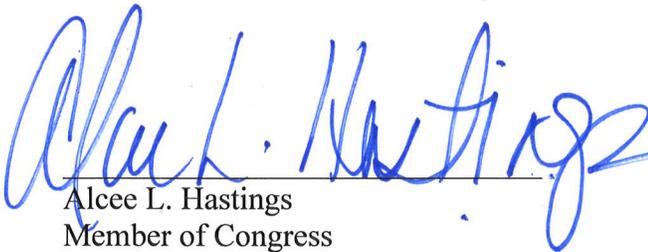
Juan Vargas  
Member of Congress



Peter Welch  
Member of Congress



Judy Chu  
Member of Congress



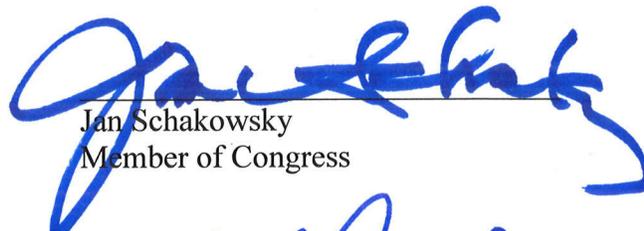
Alcee L. Hastings  
Member of Congress



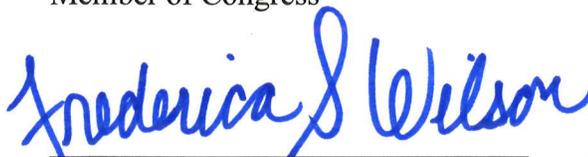
Elijah E. Cummings  
Member of Congress



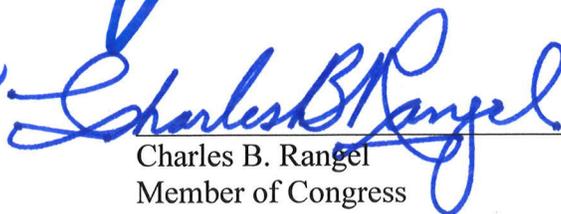
Bonnie Watson Coleman  
Member of Congress



Jan Schakowsky  
Member of Congress



Frederica S. Wilson  
Member of Congress



Charles B. Rangel  
Member of Congress



Timothy J. Walz  
Member of Congress



Alan Lowenthal  
Member of Congress



Raul Ruiz  
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Stephen F. Lynch  
Member of Congress



Michael M. Honda  
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Jerry McNerney  
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John K. Delaney  
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Mark DeSaulnier  
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Lee Zeldin  
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Chaka Fattah  
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Raúl M. Grijalva  
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Linda T. Sánchez  
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Reid Ribble  
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Paul A. Gosar  
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Martha McSally  
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Joe Courtney  
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