



1044 West Drake Road, Suite 202
Fort Collins, CO 80526



970.776.VETS (8387)



HealingWarriorsProgram.org



To Members of the House State, Civic, Military, and Veterans Affairs Committee:

Good afternoon and thank you for taking the time to review this testimony. The Healing Warriors Program is a nonprofit in Fort Collins, CO, and our vision is a suicide-free world where Veterans and their families can thrive. Our suicide prevention program is based on non-narcotic care through the evidence-based practices of Acupuncture, Healing Touch, and Craniosacral Therapy. Through these modalities, we have had the honor of providing over 35,000 treatment sessions since 2013, where each Veteran is experiencing an average of 57% decrease in emotional discomfort, physical pain, and anxiety. The treatments we have provided over these past ten years have been life-changing and lifesaving. Of those 35,000 sessions, all have been at no cost to the Veteran or family.

For the past four years, we have received support from the Veterans Assistance Grant (VAG). With these funds, we have expanded and increased our outreach to Veterans so we can continue our important work. In the four years of funding, we have served about 250 unduplicated Veterans each year, from Fort Collins to Colorado Springs. The VAG funding has given us budgetary flexibility to reach more Veterans wherever they are at. The 250 Veterans served on average per year are getting quality of life improvements without narcotics, invasive procedures, and without spending any of their own money. VAG allows us to remain accessible where we provide services and keeps the out-of-pocket costs at zero for Veterans.

As the Committee is aware, Veteran suicide remains a complex and national issue. The complexity of Veteran suicide prevention is rooted in the individual Veteran's needs, problems, and life experiences. The Veterans Administration (VA) estimates that a Veteran suicide incident is about 70 minutes. In our expertise with Veterans, we find that those 70 minutes are surrounded by a lifetime of minutes—theirs and no one else's. A lifetime of pain, loss, sorrow, success, failure, love, and hate. Programs that intervene in those 70 minutes are vital, but our program aims to prevent those 70 minutes from ever happening.

In the VA's most recent suicide report, released in November 2023, they reviewed Veteran suicide data from 2021. From 2019 to 2021, Veterans who died by suicide and had contact with the VA in the year before their death reported these top 5 symptoms:

1. Pain in the Year Prior to Death: 55.9%
2. Sleep Problems: 51.7%
3. Increased Health Problems: 40.7%
4. Relationship Problems: 33.7%
5. Recent Decline in Physical Activity: 33.0%

These symptoms are difficult to deal with but, on the surface, are not rooted in crisis. They are the symptoms that build up, over time, to that choice made within 70 minutes. This is why our mission has been critical these past ten years. We deal with all the symptoms listed above; we can limit their acuity, severity, and build-up by proactively treating them. We provide relief, healing, and a renewed sense of self so that 70 minutes never happens. The funds from VAG help us achieve, enhance, and expand our goal.



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That same VA report highlights three Veteran populations that are most at risk: Women, Rural Veterans, and Veterans aged 18-45. These demographics are at a significant risk of suicide compared to other Veteran populations. Those demographics are underserved in our current client composition, and we must change this. We must extend our existing community, outreach, and marketing to bring these high-risk folks to us. We can help prevent the hardest 70 minutes of their lives if we can get them to engage with our services. Continuing this program's funding is vital to ensure we can reach these Veterans. All the State's funding is essential to its citizens, but at Healing Warriors Program, we can say that these funds were truly lifesaving.

On behalf of the Veterans we serve, the Veterans we will serve, and the families that we will serve, we request that funding be continued for this program. Building a community is how we can fix this problem; VAG allows us to invest in our community and provide these impactful services. We can keep these services at no cost, and we can keep them accessible. Our mission will never deter—our resolve is strong—with the VAG's support it is even stronger.

Lastly, please see the quotes below from clients that these funds have impacted.

"This place has been monumental in helping me get back to a healthy mental state. I am more able to be around people, which helps me with my work. I deal with PTSD so having a way to help get me to a place where I am feeling safe again is a necessity. I love these people!"

"Without the Healing Warriors Program, I don't know what I would have done. They have helped so much with acupuncture and the Cranial thing [craniosacral therapy]. When I was working, it helped me survive my 12hr work schedule but then helped after my stroke. They have been there for support and so much more."

"We are so grateful for Healing Warriors. They go out of their way to us, are so thoughtful and help us deal with the disabilities we deal with every day. Much of the services we get there, we would not be able to afford otherwise."

Thank you for taking the time to review this testimony. Please reach out for any further clarification or questions.

Respectfully submitted,

Chase Zajc
Executive Director



March 2024

To: House State, Civic, Veterans & Military Affairs Committee

Re: AAUW Support for HB1273--Renewal of the Veterans Assistance Grants Program

Dear Committee Members:

The American Association of University Women (AAUW) is one of the oldest women's organizations in the country, empowering women since 1881. The mission of AAUW is to advance equity for women and girls through research, education and advocacy. More than 700 community leaders are AAUW members in local branches around the state.

For the past 50 years women have become a growing segment of America's armed forces. Today, women make up 10% of Colorado Veterans, and the number grows each year.

AAUW supports the progress the armed forces have made to address the barriers and implicit biases that women face. Yet, once these women leave the military, they often face new challenges in civilian life. The Veterans Assistance Grants Program has provided critical services to our women Veterans for the past 10 years.

The annual fiscal impact is a small price to pay for keeping our women Veterans in Colorado where they can continue to contribute their skills and talent to our economy.

For these reasons, AAUW of Colorado urges you to renew the VAG Program so we can continue this important benefit for our women Veterans.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Su Ryden".

Su Ryden

AAUW of Colorado Public Policy Co-Director

16699 E. Kentucky Ave. • Aurora, CO 80017

303.898.5797

Suryden25@gmail.com

American Association of University Women--AAUW is a top-rated 501(c)3 charitable organization whose mission is to advance gender equity for women and girls through research, education, and advocacy.