THE AMERICAN LEGION
Veterans Strengthening America
OFFICE OF THE NATIONAL COMMANDER
WWW.LEGION.ORG • 1608 K ST. N.W., WASHINGTON, D.C. 20006-2801 • P: (202) 861-2700

February 16, 2023

The Honorable Martin Heinrich
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on
Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and
Related Agencies

The Honorable John Boozman
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on
Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and
Related Agencies

The Honorable Debbie Wasserman Schultz
House Appropriations Subcommittee on
Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and
Related Agencies

The Honorable John Carter
House Appropriations Subcommittee on
Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and
Related Agencies

Dear Honorable U.S. Senators and Representatives,

On behalf of the nearly 1.5 million members of The American Legion, I would like to thank you for your commitment to helping veterans. Specifically, for including report language in the FY2023 omnibus bill urging the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to preserve access to lifesaving air medical services.

Veterans nationwide, especially those in rural areas, depend on air medical services for transportation to medical centers in the event of a health emergency. If VA goes through with its proposal to bring the reimbursement rate for emergency air medical services in line with Medicare – which currently reimburses providers at less than 50 percent of operating costs – air medical bases will be forced to close. Millions of rural veterans and their communities would lose access to yet another critical health resource.

The *No Surprises Act* requires air medical companies to submit transport cost data to the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). As you noted in the report language, it is imperative VA coordinates with HHS to review the updated cost data and delay implementing any changes to its reimbursement rate until this data is released and analyzed. In doing so, VA can ensure any changes to its reimbursement rate take into account the true cost of air medical transport.

Once again, The American Legion would like to thank you for preserving access to lifesaving air medical services for veterans. We greatly appreciate your continued efforts to prioritize the health and safety of our nation's veterans. We look forward to working with you again in the future.

For God & Country,

Vincent J. "Jim" Troiola
National Commander