The American Legion

OFFICE OF THE
NATIONAL COMMANDER

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February 12, 2018

The Honorable Mike Coffman
United States House of Representatives
2443 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Coffman:

On behalf of the 2 million members of The American Legion, we express support for the H.R. 4635, the "*Peer-2-Peer Act*," legislation to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs (VA) to increase the number of peer-to-peer counselors providing counseling for women veterans, and for other purposes.

This bill, as drafted, would emphasize counseling for women who suffered sexual trauma while serving, have Post Traumatic Stress Disorder or another mental health condition, or are at risk of becoming homeless. The American Legion supports the goal of this legislation recognizing risk of suicide is 2.4 times higher among female veterans when compared to their civilian counterparts.

The American Legions knows existing peer-to-peer counseling programs have been successful and this bill creates a more representative program of the veteran population. The VA Peer Support Program currently employs more than 1,000 peer counselors in VA health care facilities and Community Based Outpatient Clinics around the nation who are trained to help veterans manage and overcome mental health conditions, substance use disorders, homelessness, and other challenges. Peer counselors are veterans themselves and can relate in profound ways to the mental health challenges facing veterans.

Through American Legion Resolution number 337, titled *Support for Veteran Quality of Life,* passed at The American Legion's National Convention in 2016, we are able to support such a measure to better the quality of life for veterans.

In conclusion, The American Legion applauds your leadership in addressing issues that are important to America's servicemembers, veterans and their families.

For God and Country,

Denise H. Rohan

DENISE H. ROHAN
National Commander