

June 6, 2023

Dr. Lester Martinez-Lopez  
Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs  
Department of Defense  
4000 Defense Pentagon  
Washington, DC 20301

LTG Telita Crosland  
Director, Defense Health Agency  
Department of Defense  
4000 Defense Pentagon  
Washington, DC 20301

Dear Dr. Martinez and LTG Crosland:

On behalf of the more than 270 undersigned organizations representing individuals, families, providers, researchers and advocates in the mental health and military communities, we are dismayed that the Department of Defense has not implemented Sec. 701 and request that the Department expeditiously implement to ensure servicemembers and their families can be early identified and have full access to eating disorders care. Within the Fiscal Year 2022 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), Congress passed [P.L. 117-81 Sec. 701](#) based on [S.194/H.R.2767](#), the bipartisan SERVE Act, to expand access to eating disorders care for military family members over 20 years old and improve eating disorders identification and treatment for servicemembers. The deadline to implement these provisions was September 30th, 2022, as specified by the law. However, the Department of Defense (DOD) neglected to implement these life-saving provisions, leaving military spouses and adult children without access to evidence-based care. In response to this, [nine bipartisan Senators sent a letter to the DOD in March](#) requesting clinical justification for the continued lack in coverage by April 31, 2023, but have received no such justification. Military family members with eating disorders have waited for 18 months for the DOD to act; there is no more time. We urge the Defense Health Agency to implement the law in Sec. 701 immediately to grant servicemembers and their families comprehensive eating disorders care afforded to them by law.

Eating disorders carry the second highest mortality rate of any psychiatric condition,<sup>1</sup> with suicide occurring 23 times more often than in the general population.<sup>2</sup> Servicemembers and their families are disproportionately affected by eating disorders,<sup>3</sup> with the Defense Health Board revealing significant impacts on active-duty servicewomen's health and readiness.<sup>4</sup> Military spouses and children also suffer eating disorder symptoms at rates three times their civilian counterparts.<sup>5</sup> According to the DOD, 19,468 military dependents were diagnosed with an eating disorder from FY 2014 through FY 2018.<sup>6</sup>

Despite these disturbing rates – which only worsened during the pandemic,<sup>7</sup> the DOD has still not implemented Sec. 701 to provide residential eating disorders care for adult active-duty dependents between the ages of 21 and 64 years old. Residential treatment for eating disorders is a generally accepted medical standard of evidence-based care effective in weight restoration and reduction of disordered behaviors for

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<sup>1</sup> Arcelus, J., Mitchell, A.J., Wales, J., & Nielsen, S. (2011). Mortality rates in patients with anorexia nervosa and other eating disorders. A meta-analysis of 36 studies. *Archives of General Psychiatry*, 68(7),724-731.

<sup>2</sup> Harris, E.C. & Barraclough, B. (1997). Suicide as an outcome for mental disorders: a meta-analysis. *British Journal of Psychiatry*, 170(3), 205-228.

<sup>3</sup> Bartlett, B. and Mitchell, K., 2015. Eating disorders in military and veteran men and women: A systematic review. *International Journal of Eating Disorders*, 48(8), pp.1057-1069.

Waasdorp, C. E., Caboot, J. B., Robinson, C. A., Abraham, A. A., & Adelman, W. P. (2007). Screening Military Dependent Adolescent Females for Disordered Eating. *Military Medicine*, 172(9), 962-967. doi:10.7205/milmed.172.9.962

<sup>4</sup> Parkinson, M., 2021. Decision Brief: Active Duty Women'S Health Care Services. [online] Health.mil. Available at: <https://health.mil/Reference-Center/Presentations/2020/11/05/ADWHDecision-Brief>

<sup>5</sup> Higgins Neyland MK, Shank LM, Burke NL, et al. Parental deployment and distress, and adolescent disordered eating in prevention-seeking military dependents. *Int J Eat Disord*. 2019;1-9. <https://doi.org/10.1002/eat.231806>.

<sup>6</sup> Armed Forces Health Surveillance Branch, Diagnoses of Eating Disorders, Active Component Service Members, U.S. Armed Forces, 2013-2017, Medical Surveillance Monthly Report, (Silver Spring, MD: June 2018), p. 18

<sup>7</sup> Dave Little, MD, Adrianna Teriakidis, PhD, Eric Lindgren, JD, Steven Allen, MD, Eric Barkley, Lily Rubin-Miller, MPH, April 2021, <https://epicresearch.org/articles/increase-in-adolescent-hospitalizations-related-to-eating-disorders>

adult patients.<sup>8</sup> Private civilian health insurances typically cover *all levels of care* for eating disorders, including residential treatment, *regardless of age*. Congressional intent in Sec. 701 was for TRICARE to address this gap in coverage and to afford the same comprehensive care to active-duty dependents.

We urge the DOD to take immediate action to implement the provisions passed by Congress and signed by the President in [P.L. 117-81 Sec. 701](#). The Biden Administration [made a commitment in March](#) to improve mental health care for military and veteran families but will not even execute existing law to prevent and treat eating disorders among servicemembers and dependents. Implementing Sec. 701 is necessary to fulfill the Administration's commitment to bettering the health and wellbeing of service members and their families.

Thank you for your attention to this request.

Sincerely,

REDC Consortium	American Counseling Association
Eating Disorders Coalition	American Dance Therapy Association
2020 Mom	American Foundation for Suicide Prevention
Academy for Eating Disorders	American Group Psychotherapy Association
Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (AND)	American Psychiatric Association
Active Minds	American Psychological Association
Alabama – Alsana Birmingham	AMVETS
Alabama – Alsana Huntsville	ANAD
Alaska Alliance for Eating Disorders	Anxiety and Depression Association of America
American Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics	Arizona - Center for Discovery
American Art Therapy Association	Arizona - Mirasol Eating Disorder Recovery Centers
American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy	Arizona - Ravenhawk Recovery
American Association for Psychoanalysis in Clinical Social Work	Arkansas – Living Hope Eating Disorder Treatment Center
American Association of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry	Association for Ambulatory Behavioral Healthcare
American Association of Suicidology	Association for Behavioral Health and Wellness

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<sup>8</sup> Fisher, M., Henretty, J. R., Cox, S. A., Feinstein, R., Fornari, V., Moskowitz, L., Schneider, M., Levine, S., Malizio, J., & Fishbein, J. (2019). Demographics and outcomes of patients with eating disorders treated in residential care. *Frontiers in Psychology, 10*, 2985. <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.02985/full>

Twohig, M. P., Bluett, E. J., Cullum, J. L., Mitchell, P. R., Powers, P. S., Lensegrav-Benson, T., & Quakenbush-Roberts, B. (2016). Effectiveness and clinical response rates of a residential eating disorders facility. *Eating Disorders, 24*(3), 224-239. [http://www.avalonhills.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Effectiveness\\_and\\_clinical\\_response\\_rates.pdf](http://www.avalonhills.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Effectiveness_and_clinical_response_rates.pdf)

Be Real USA

California – Alsana Monterey

California – Alsana Santa Barbara

California – Alsana Thousand Oaks

California – Alsana Westlake Village

California - BALANCE Treatment Center  
Calabasas

California - BALANCE Treatment Center  
Fresno

California - BALANCE Treatment Center  
Monterey

California - BALANCE Treatment Center San  
Luis Obispo

California - BALANCE Treatment Center Santa  
Maria

California - BALANCE Treatment Center  
Ventura

California - BALANCE Treatment Center  
Visalia

California - Bay Area Nutrition

California - Center for Discovery Northern  
California

California - Center for Discovery Southern  
California

California - Central Coast Treatment Center

California - Eating Recovery Center Sacramento

California - Monte Nido Eating Disorder  
Treatment Center Calabasas

California - Monte Nido Eating Disorder  
Treatment Center East Bay

California - Monte Nido Eating Disorder  
Treatment Center Los Angeles

California - Monte Nido Eating Disorder  
Treatment Center Malibu

California - Monte Nido Eating Disorder  
Treatment Center Mountain Nest

California - Monte Nido Eating Disorder  
Treatment Center Newport Beach

California - Monte Nido Eating Disorder  
Treatment Center Vista

California – Montecatini Eating Disorder  
Treatment Center

California - Pathlight Mood & Anxiety Center  
Sacramento

California - Reasons Eating Disorder Center

California - Renfrew Center

California - Rogers Behavioral Health Los  
Angeles

California - Rogers Behavioral Health San  
Diego

California - Rogers Behavioral Health San  
Francisco

Children and Adults with Attention-  
Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (CHADD)

Clinical Social Work Association

Coalition for the Advancement and Application  
of Psychological Science (CAAPS)

Colorado - ACUTE Center for Eating Disorders

Colorado – EDCare Colorado Springs

Colorado – EDCare Denver

Colorado - Pathlight Mood & Anxiety Center  
Denver 1st Ave

Colorado - Pathlight Mood & Anxiety Center  
Denver 5th Ave

Colorado - Pathlight Mood & Anxiety Center  
Denver Lowry St

Colorado - Pathlight Mood & Anxiety Center  
Denver Spruce St

Colorado - Rogers Behavioral Health

Commissioned Officers Association of the U.S.  
Public Health Service, Inc.

Connecticut - Center for Discovery

Connecticut - Walden Behavioral Care

Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance

Eating Disorder Hope

Employees Assistance Professionals Association  
(EAPA)

EQUIP

Exceptional Families of the Military

FedUp

Florida - Center for Discovery

Florida - Heroes' Mile Veterans Treatment  
Center

Florida - Renfrew Center Coconut Creek

Florida - Renfrew Center Orlando

Florida - Renfrew Center West Palm Beach

Florida - Rogers Behavioral Health Miami

Florida - Rogers Behavioral Health Tampa

Georgia - Center for Discovery

Georgia - Monte Nido Eating Disorder  
Treatment Center Atlanta

Georgia - Renfrew Center

Georgia - Rogers Behavioral Health

Georgia - Veritas Collaborative Atlanta

Georgia - Walden Behavioral Care

Global Alliance for Behavioral Health and  
Social Justice

Hawaii - 'Ai Pono

IAEDP

Idaho - Center for Change Boise

IFEDD, The International Federation of Eating  
Disorder Dietitians

Illinois - Acadia Healthcare/Timberline Knolls

Illinois - Center for Discovery

Illinois - Eating Recovery Center Northbrook

Illinois - Monte Nido Eating Disorder Treatment  
Center Chicago

Illinois - Pathlight Mood & Anxiety Center  
Chicago

Illinois - Pathlight Mood & Anxiety Center Erie

Illinois - Pathlight Mood & Anxiety Center Oak  
Brook

Illinois - Renfrew Center

Illinois - Rogers Behavioral Health Hinsdale

Illinois - Rogers Behavioral Health Skokie

Illinois - SunCloud Health Chicago

Illinois - SunCloud Health Naperville

Illinois - SunCloud Health Northbrook Lake  
Cook Rd

Illinois - SunCloud Health Northbrook Skokie  
Blvd

Indiana - Farrington Specialty Centers

Indiana - Selah House

International OCD Foundation

International Society for Psychiatric Mental  
Health Nurses

Iowa - Eating Disorder Coalition of Iowa

Kansas - Center for Discovery

Kansas - EDCare

Kansas - McCallum Place Overland Park

Kentucky - Louisville Center for Eating  
Disorders & Eating Anxiety Treatment  
Laboratory and Clinic

Kentucky Eating Disorders Council	Military Child Education Coalition® (MCEC®)
Louisiana - CHNOLA Feeding and Eating Disorders Clinic	Minnesota - Rogers Behavioral Health Minneapolis
Louisiana - The Eating Disorders Treatment Center at River Oaks Hospital	Minnesota - Rogers Behavioral Health St. Paul
Maryland - Monte Nido Eating Disorder Treatment Center Roxbury Mills	Minnesota - The Emily Program Treatment Duluth
Maryland - Pathlight Mood & Anxiety Center Baltimore	Minnesota - The Emily Program Treatment Minneapolis
Maryland - Renfrew Center Baltimore	Minnesota - The Emily Program Treatment St. Louis Park
Maryland - Renfrew Center Bethesda	Minnesota - The Emily Program Treatment St. Paul - Cleveland Ave
Maryland - SunCloud Health Gaithersburg	Minnesota - The Emily Program Treatment St. Paul - Como Ave
Maryland – the Eating Disorder Center	Missouri – McCallum Place St. Louis
Massachusetts - Cambridge Eating Disorder Center	Missouri Eating Disorders Association
Massachusetts - Center for Discovery	Moonshadow's Spirit
Massachusetts - Monte Nido Eating Disorder Treatment Center Boston	Multi Service Eating Disorders Association Inc
Massachusetts - Monte Nido Eating Disorder Treatment Center Laurel Hill	NAADAC, the Association for Addiction Professionals
Massachusetts - Renfrew Center	National Alliance for Eating Disorders
Massachusetts - Walden Behavioral Care Braintree	National Alliance on Mental Illness
Massachusetts - Walden Behavioral Care Dedham	National Association for Behavioral Healthcare
Massachusetts - Walden Behavioral Care Peabody	National Association for Children's Behavioral Health
Massachusetts - Walden Behavioral Care Waltham	National Association for Rural Mental Health
Massachusetts - Walden Behavioral Care West Borough	National Association of County Behavioral Health & Developmental Disability Directors
Maternal Mental Health Leadership Alliance	National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners
Mental Health America	National Association of Social Workers
Michigan Eating Disorders Alliance	National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors

National Association to Advance Fat Acceptance

National Center of Excellence for Eating Disorders

National Eating Disorders Association

National Federation of Families

National League for Nursing

National Military Family Association

National Register of Health Service Psychologists

Nebraska – EDCare

Nebraska Eating Disorders Network

New Hampshire - Cambridge Eating Disorder Center

New Jersey - Bergen New Bridge Medical Center, Center for Eating Disorders & Body Positivity

New Jersey - Center for Discovery

New Jersey - Renfrew Center Mount Laurel

New Jersey - Renfrew Center Paramus

New York - Center for Discovery

New York - Monte Nido Eating Disorder Treatment Center Glen Cove

New York - Monte Nido Eating Disorder Treatment Center Manhattan

New York - Monte Nido Eating Disorder Treatment Center River Towns

New York - Monte Nido Eating Disorder Treatment Center Rockland

New York - Monte Nido Eating Disorder Treatment Center Westchester County

New York - Monte Nido Eating Disorder Treatment Center Western New York

New York - Mount Sinai Center of Excellence in Eating and Weight Disorders

New York - Renfrew Center New York City

New York - Renfrew Center White Plains

North Carolina – Carolina Resource Center for Eating Disorders

North Carolina - Renfrew Center

North Carolina - Veritas Collaborative Charlotte

North Carolina - Veritas Collaborative Durham Douglas St

North Carolina - Veritas Collaborative Durham Douglas St

North Carolina - Veritas Collaborative Durham Stirrup Creek Drive

Ohio - Akron Children's Hospital ED Program

Ohio - The Emily Program Treatment Beachwood

Ohio - The Emily Program Treatment Cleveland

Ohio - The Emily Program Treatment Columbus

Ohio - The Intuitive Eating Center

Oklahoma - Laureate Eating Disorders Program

Oklahoma - Living Hope Eating Disorder Treatment Center

Oklahoma Eating Disorders Association

Oregon - Center for Discovery

Oregon - Monte Nido Eating Disorder Treatment Center Eugene

Oregon - Monte Nido Eating Disorder Treatment Center Portland

Oregon - Monte Nido Eating Disorder Treatment Center RainRock

Oregon - Monte Nido Eating Disorder Treatment Center West Linn

Pennsylvania - Monte Nido Eating Disorder Treatment Center Philadelphia

Pennsylvania - Renfrew Center Philadelphia Center City

Pennsylvania - Renfrew Center Philadelphia Spring Lane

Pennsylvania - Renfrew Center Pittsburgh

Pennsylvania - Renfrew Center Radnor

Pennsylvania - Rogers Behavioral Health

Pennsylvania - The Emily Program Treatment Wexford

Project HEAL

Project Maria

Psychotherapy Action Network

RI International

Roots Nutrition, FLG

SMART Recovery

South Carolina - Village Counseling Mount Pleasant

South Carolina Eating Disorders Association

Strategic Training Initiative for the Prevention of Eating Disorders

Tennessee - Focus Treatment Center

Tennessee - Renfrew Center

Tennessee - Rogers Behavioral Health

Texas - Center for Discovery

Texas - Eating Recovery Center San Antonio

Texas - Eating Recovery Center The Woodlands

Texas - Monte Nido Eating Disorder Treatment Center Houston

Texas - Pathlight Mood & Anxiety Center Austin

Texas - Pathlight Mood & Anxiety Center Fort Worth

Texas - Pathlight Mood & Anxiety Center Round Rock

Texas - Pathlight Mood & Anxiety Center San Antonio

Texas - Pathlight Mood & Anxiety Center The Woodlands

The Body Activists

The Eating Disorder Foundation

The Kennedy Forum

The Mental Health Strategic Impact Initiative (S2i)

The National Alliance to Advance Adolescent Health

Treatment Communities of America

Tricare for Kids Coalition

Utah - Center for Change Cottonwood Heights

Utah - Center for Change Orem

Virginia - Center for Discovery

Virginia - Prosperity Eating Disorders and Wellness Herndon

Virginia - Prosperity Eating Disorders and Wellness Norfolk

Virginia - Stay Strong VA

Virginia - The Barry Robinson Center

Virginia - the Eating Disorder Center

Washington - Center for Discovery

Washington - Opal: Food + Body Wisdom

Washington - Pathlight Mood & Anxiety Center Seattle Boren Ave

Washington - Pathlight Mood & Anxiety Center Seattle Madison St

Washington - Rogers Behavioral Health

Washington - The Emily Program Treatment  
Seattle Nickerson Street

Washington - The Emily Program Treatment  
Seattle Westlake Ave North

Washington - The Emily Program Treatment  
South Sound

Washington - The Emily Program Treatment  
Spokane

Washington Association for the Education of  
Young Children

Washington University School of Medicine

West Virginia - WVU School of Medicine  
Charleston Division; CAMC Institute of  
Academic Medicine

Wisconsin - Rogers Behavioral Health Appleton

Wisconsin - Rogers Behavioral Health Brown  
Deer

Wisconsin - Rogers Behavioral Health Kenosha

Wisconsin - Rogers Behavioral Health Madison

Wisconsin - Rogers Behavioral Health  
Oconomowoc

Wisconsin - Rogers Behavioral Health  
Sheboygan

Wisconsin - Rogers Behavioral Health West  
Allis

WithAll

Within Health

Wounded Warrior Project