

September XX, 2018

The Honorable Phil Roe
Chairman
Committee on Veterans' Affairs
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Tim Walz
Ranking Member
Committee on Veterans' Affairs
U.S House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Roe and Ranking Member Walz,

We write you today in support of the *Vietnam-Era Veterans Hepatitis C Testing Enhancement Act* (H.R. 5922) and ask that you work with your colleagues to advance and enact this important bill. This legislation is bipartisan and budget-neutral, and serves to further the ongoing commitment to eradicating hepatitis C in meaningful ways.

We thank Congress for recent efforts to encourage the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to take a leadership role in identifying and addressing hepatitis C, and we recognize the VA for its success thus far. However, there are many veterans that have not benefited from enhanced VA screening efforts. H.R. 5922 seeks to fill this gap and reach more of these individuals by facilitating rapid outreach testing through partnership with veteran service organizations. The proposed pilot program is based on a collaborative model that American Legion Post 1619 has used to successfully test large numbers of veterans for hepatitis C and subsequently educate affected individuals about their health status and options for care.

Moreover, while it is known that hepatitis C occurs at a higher rate in military personnel than in the general public, the exact prevalence among Vietnam Era Veterans remains unknown. During the conflict in Vietnam, Hepatitis C had yet to be named and military personnel lacked the benefit of modern infection control practices. The pilot study called for by H.R. 5922 seeks to test 350,000 Vietnam Era Veterans and establish the prevalence rate for this population.

There has been progress combatting hepatitis C among veterans and H.R. 5922 marks an important step forward. This common sense legislation will provide timely public health information while honoring the commitment of our Vietnam Era Veterans by ensuring that they have the opportunity to know their health status.

We, the undersigned organizations, ask that you support H.R. 5922 and move it quickly through the legislative process. Thank you for your time and your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,
American Liver Foundation
Hepatitis B Foundation
Hep B United
Liver Health Connection
National Alliance of State and Territorial AIDS Directors
National Viral Hepatitis Roundtable
The AIDS Institute
Vietnam Veterans of America
Veterans Health Council
Etc...

