



May 1, 2020

The Honorable Jerry Moran
Chairman
Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jon Tester
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member Tester:

The 16 undersigned members of the Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities and The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights appreciate the immense amount of work Congress has put into responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. We applaud the steps taken so far to protect those working on the front lines to save lives and to sustain so many Americans in need of vital economic and health supports during this emergency. In recent weeks, our coalitions have elevated a number of critical priorities for the constituencies we represent. We write today to align our organizations with an issue that has been raised by many veterans and military service organizations: support for H.R. 2094, the Civilian Health and Medical Program of the Department of Veterans Affairs (CHAMPVA) Children's Care Protection Act of 2019.

Currently, the children of veterans with disabilities who rely on the CHAMPVA for access to health care are not allowed to remain on their parents' insurance until the age of 26, as is provided under the Affordable Care Act (ACA). In this moment where people across the nation face uncertainty, we must do everything we can to ensure people are not losing their access to health care. Our organizations are deeply concerned about the health security of this segment of the population. We believe these children of veterans are particularly vulnerable and need this fundamental health insurance program now as a means of securing health care and protecting their well-being. It is also a simple matter of equity that these young people should not be excluded from the health coverage protections afforded to all other young adults until age 26 under the ACA. As such, we urge you to pass H.R. 2094, the CHAMPVA Children's Care Protection Act of 2019 out of committee and to support its inclusion in future COVID-19 relief legislation.

When the ACA was signed into law in 2010, it required private-sector health plans to allow children to stay on their parents' insurance until the age of 26, but this coverage was not extended to military or veteran health coverage. The National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for FY 2011 increased dependent coverage under TRICARE up to age 26 to make it consistent with the ACA. As a result, the only dependents that are not covered under a parent's health insurance policy up to age 26 are those of 100 percent service-connected disabled veterans covered under CHAMPVA. Currently, a child of a veteran loses eligibility for CHAMPVA at the age of 23 if they are a student or at the age of 18 otherwise. The CHAMPVA Children's Care Protection Act would fix this loophole for the VA's CHAMPVA program.



During this unprecedented outbreak, the children of veterans with disabilities face losing CHAMPVA coverage through no fault of their own. Many of these young people are unable to finish college or may be precluded from enrolling or attending college during the coming weeks and months because of financial or other hardships caused by the COVID-19 crisis. Others have lost their jobs as a result of the economic disruption caused by the pandemic. Given the extreme magnitude of this crisis, we are asking that you pass the CHAMPVA Children's Care Protection Act out of committee and include this legislation in the next coronavirus response package.

We appreciate your immediate attention to this pressing issue. We look forward to working with you to get the CHAMPVA Children's Care Protection Act included in the upcoming supplemental COVID-19 response legislation.

Sincerely,

The Arc of the United States
Autistic Self Advocacy Network
Center for Disability Rights
Center for Public Representation
Center for Reproductive Rights
Christopher & Dana Reeve Foundation
Coalition for Disability Health Equity
Disability Rights Education & Defense Fund (DREDF)
Epilepsy Foundation
The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights
National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities
National Council on Independent Living
National Multiple Sclerosis Society
Paralyzed Veterans of America
RespectAbility
U.S. International Council on Disabilities

Cc: The Honorable Sherrod Brown, Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs