

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 7, 2023

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chair
Subcommittee on Military Construction,
Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Boozman
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Military Construction,
Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Murray and Ranking Member Boozman,

As you begin the process of developing spending priorities for the Fiscal Year 2024 (FY24) Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations bills, we respectfully request robust funding for Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) programs that serve rural veterans.

According to the VA, there are 4.7 million veterans residing in rural areas across the United States, and 2.7 million are enrolled in the VA health care system. These veterans face unique challenges accessing the quality, timely VA services they earned through their service to our nation.

We therefore request that the VA's Office of Rural Health (ORH) be funded at \$338 million in FY24, consistent with the FY23 enacted funding level. ORH funding supports national programs, special projects, and research initiatives aimed at better serving rural veterans including:

- Clinical Resource Hubs, which utilize both in-person and telehealth solutions to increase rural veteran access to primary, mental health, and specialty care;
- Several need-specific telehealth programs, including rehabilitation, care for rural veterans with HIV, and web-based therapy for military sexual trauma;
- Five Veterans Rural Health Resources Centers, which facilitate research, innovation, and technical assistance in support of rural veterans; and
- Rural Consultants at each of the nation's 18 Veterans Integrated Service Networks (VISNs) to support each VISN in addressing rural veteran-specific needs and issues.

Transportation also remains a key barrier to access for rural veterans. According to an ORH assessment, transportation is the top challenge facing rural veterans, who tend to live in areas with fewer health care facilities and providers and face unique socioeconomic challenges.

According to the VA, 55% of VA-enrolled rural veterans are 65 or older and 44% of enrolled rural veterans earn an annual income of less than \$35,000.

We therefore request robust funding to expand and improve transportation access to and from facilities that serve rural veterans. This includes funding for:

- the Veterans Transportation Service, which provides several transportation options to improve veteran access to services, often in partnership with veteran service organizations and local entities;
- the Highly Rural Transportation Grants (HRTG) program, which aids veterans in areas with fewer than seven people per square mile;
- the Beneficiary Travel program, which provides essential reimbursement for mileage and travel expenses.

Congress must ensure the VA has the resources necessary to reach all of our veterans, no matter where they live. Our rural veterans have earned the right to quality, timely, and accessible care.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

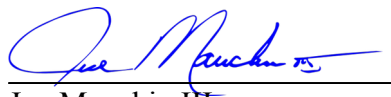
Sincerely,



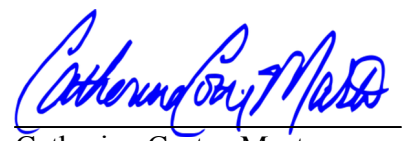
Jon Ossoff
United States Senator




M. Michael Rounds
United States Senator



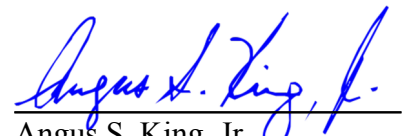
Joe Manchin III
United States Senator



Catherine Cortez Masto
United States Senator



Mark R. Warner
United States Senator



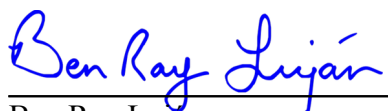
Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senator



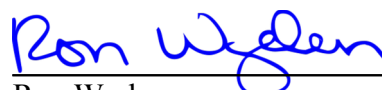
John Hickenlooper
United States Senator



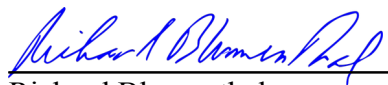
Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator



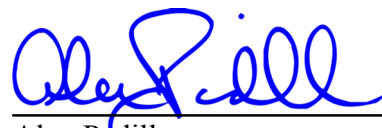
Ben Ray Lujan
United States Senator




Ron Wyden
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



Alex Padilla
United States Senator



Tim Kaine
United States Senator



Tina Smith
United States Senator



Sherrod Brown
United States Senator



Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator



Jacky Rosen
United States Senator



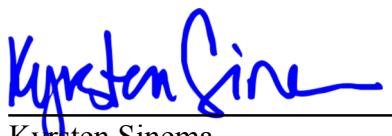
Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator



Raphael Warnock
United States Senator



Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



Kyrsten Sinema
United States Senator



Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



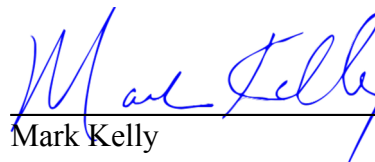
Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator



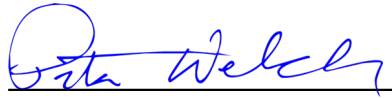
Margaret Wood Hassan
United States Senator




Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator



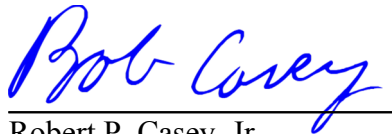
Mark Kelly
United States Senator



Peter Welch
United States Senator



Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator



Robert P. Casey, Jr.
United States Senator

**Military Construction and VA Group Letter Table
MilCon_Ossoff_Group_230407-112209[LetterID 14686]**

ID	Sub	Request Agency or Account	Request Project Name	Request (\$000)
101575	MilCon Group	[Title II]/[Veterans Health Administration]/[Medical Services]/[Rural Health] [Member Staff] - Joshua Altman josh_altman@ossoff.senate.gov 202-878-0422	Office of Rural Health [Member's Request (text)] - Support the PBR.	\$0
101574	MilCon Group	[Title II]/[Veterans Health Administration]/[Medical Services]/[Rural Health] [Member Staff] - Joshua Altman josh_altman@ossoff.senate.gov 202-878-0422	Transportation Programs for Rural Veterans [Member's Request (text)] - Support the PBR	\$0

Request ID: 101575

Agency or Account:	[Title II]/[Veterans Health Administration]/[Medical Services]/[Rural Health]	Project Name:	Office of Rural Health
Member/s:	Ossoff, Jon(D-GA); Bennet, Michael(D-CO); Blumenthal, Richard(D-CT); Brown, Sherrod(D-OH); Casey, Robert(D-PA); Cortez Masto, Catherine(D-NV); Duckworth, Tammy(D-IL); Durbin, Richard(D-IL); Feinstein, Dianne(D-CA); Gillibrand, Kirsten(D-NY); Hassan, Margaret Wood(D-NH); Hickenlooper, John(D-CO); Kaine, Tim(D-VA); Kelly, Mark(D-AZ); King, Angus(I-ME); Klobuchar, Amy(D-MN); Luján, Ben Ray(D-NM); Manchin, Joe(D-WV); Merkley, Jeff(D-OR); Padilla, Alex(D-CA); Rosen, Jacky(D-NV); Rounds, Mike(R-SD); Shaheen, Jeanne(D-NH); Sinema, Kyrsten(D-AZ); Smith, Tina(D-MN); Warner, Mark(D-VA); Warnock, Raphael(D-GA); Welch, Peter(D-VT); Wyden, Ron(D-OR)	Subcommittee:	MilCon
Request Type:	Group	Staff Contact:	Joshua Altman josh_altman@ossoff.senate.gov 202-878-0422
Justification:	<p>ORH funding supports national programs, special projects, and research initiatives aimed at better serving rural veterans including:</p> <p>Clinical Resource Hubs, which utilize both in-person and telehealth solutions to increase rural veteran access to primary, mental health, and specialty care;</p> <p>Several need-specific telehealth programs, including rehabilitation, care for rural veterans with HIV, and web-based therapy for military sexual trauma;</p> <p>Five Veterans Rural Health Resources Centers, which facilitate research, innovation, and technical assistance in support of rural veterans; and</p> <p>Rural Consultants at each of the nation's 18 Veterans Integrated Service Networks (VISNs) to support each VISN in addressing rural veteran-specific needs and issues.</p> <p>See letter for additional information regarding this request.</p>		
Proposed Bill Language:		Proposed Report Language:	
Member's Request:	\$0	Member's Request (text):	Support the PBR.
Enacted Level:	\$0	President's Request:	\$0
CDS Request:	No	Intended Country:	

Request ID: 101574

Agency or Account:	[Title II]/[Veterans Health Administration]/[Medical Services]/[Rural Health]	Project Name:	Transportation Programs for Rural Veterans
Member/s:	Ossoff, Jon(D-GA); Bennet, Michael(D-CO); Blumenthal, Richard(D-CT); Brown, Sherrod(D-OH); Casey, Robert(D-PA); Cortez Masto, Catherine(D-NV); Duckworth, Tammy(D-IL); Durbin, Richard(D-IL); Feinstein, Dianne(D-CA); Gillibrand, Kirsten(D-NY); Hassan, Margaret Wood(D-NH); Hickenlooper, John(D-CO); Kaine, Tim(D-VA); Kelly, Mark(D-AZ); King, Angus(I-ME); Klobuchar, Amy(D-MN); Luján, Ben Ray(D-NM); Manchin, Joe(D-WV); Merkley, Jeff(D-OR); Padilla, Alex(D-CA); Rosen, Jacky(D-NV); Rounds, Mike(R-SD); Shaheen, Jeanne(D-NH); Sinema, Kyrsten(D-AZ); Smith, Tina(D-MN); Warner, Mark(D-VA); Warnock, Raphael(D-GA); Welch, Peter(D-VT); Wyden, Ron(D-OR)	Subcommittee:	MilCon
Request Type:	Group	Staff Contact:	Joshua Altman josh_altman@ossoff.senate.gov 202-878-0422
Justification:	We request robust funding for VA transportation programs that improve rural veteran access to VA services. See letter.		
Proposed Bill Language:		Proposed Report Language:	
Member's Request:	\$0	Member's Request (text):	Support the PBR
Enacted Level:	\$0	President's Request:	\$0
CDS Request:	No	Intended Country:	