

# Veterans Health Council<sup>SM</sup>

improving veterans health through information and education

March 23, 2015

The Honorable Jerry Moran  
United States Senate  
361-A Russell Senate Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jon Tester  
United States Senate  
311 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Moran and Tester,

On behalf of the Veterans Health Council, I am writing to express our support for S. 564, which would improve Veterans' access to needed hearing healthcare services by enabling the Department of Veterans Affairs to hire hearing aid specialists to serve on its hearing healthcare team, and by encouraging its increased use of these professionals in its fee-for-service network.

The Veterans Health Council is a program of Vietnam Veterans of America and includes more than 80 organizations that are dedicated to improving health care for veterans through collaboration, advocacy, and education. Our partnering organizations represent medical and clinical professions, employee representatives, advocacy and veterans organizations, and healthcare firms.

The challenge for Veterans to access hearing healthcare services is very real. With hearing loss and tinnitus being the top two disabilities for which Veterans are seeking services, and existing limitations on the structure and process for providing these services, there is a significant backlog which is leading to long wait times and abbreviated service delivery once Veterans can see a provider. These long wait times, coupled with long distances to travel and other frustrations means that many Veterans either forgo care, give up on their hearing aids, or opt to see a private provider who can help them quickly and locally, but oftentimes at their own expense.

We thank you for introducing S.564, the Veterans Hearing Aid Access and Assistance Act, which will help address these problems and make VA hearing healthcare more convenient and efficient for Veterans, and improve outcomes overall. Further, the Veterans Health Council encourages other Members of the Senate to co-sponsor S. 564.

With questions, you can contact me at [tberger@vva.org](mailto:tberger@vva.org) or 301-585-4000, ext. 148.

Sincerely,



Thomas J. Berger, Ph.D.  
Executive Director, Veterans Health Council

