



September 11, 2023

U.S. Senator Jon Tester, Chair
Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs
311 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

U.S. Senator Jerry Moran, Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs
521 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

U.S. Senator Patty Murray, Chair
Senate MilCon-VA Appropriations
Subcommittee
154 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

U.S. Senator John Boozman, Ranking
Senate MilCon-VA Appropriations
Subcommittee
555 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Honorable U.S. Senators Tester, Moran, Murray, and Boozman,

On behalf of the Save Our Air Medical Resources (SOAR) Campaign, we are writing to thank you for introducing the *VA Emergency Transportation Access Act*. As an organization committed to ensuring that all Americans have access to emergency air medical services, we are grateful for your efforts to ensure the millions of Veterans living in rural parts of the country continue to have access to lifesaving transport.

Earlier this year, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced cuts to its reimbursement rate for emergency medical services. This change is set to take effect in February 2024 and will bring the VA's reimbursement rate in line with Medicare, which covers less than half of the costs associated with providing air transport. If air medical providers are not reimbursed adequately, bases will be forced to shut down, limiting access to this lifesaving service. These cuts will have dire consequences for the 4.7 million Veterans living in remote communities without access to a nearby hospital or medical center.

The *VA Emergency Transportation Access Act* is a commonsense solution that would ensure Veterans have access to air ambulance transport – whether planned or in an emergency. For Veterans who live long distances from medical care, this bill provides a lifeline during the most critical moments.

This legislation is a commonsense approach requiring the VA to conduct a sensible review process and consider the economic and access to care impacts of potential cuts. It also requires consultation with medical experts and other key stakeholders before making adjustments to the reimbursement rate. And lastly, it requires the VA to consider the true costs of providing air medical transport.

We applaud your leadership on this issue and look forward to working with you, the VA, and our nation's Veterans to ensure access to lifesaving air medical services is preserved.

Sincerely,
SOAR Campaign