



July 12, 2023

The Honorable Jennifer Kiggans
U.S. House of Representatives
1037 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Chrissy Houlahan
U.S. House of Representatives
1727 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Kiggans and Representative Houlahan:

AARP, which advocates for the more than 100 million Americans age 50 and over, is pleased to endorse H.R.3581, the Caregiver Outreach and Program Enhancement (COPE) Act. We applaud your bipartisan efforts to support military and veteran family caregivers by improving their access to mental health counseling and treatment.

A recent AARP survey revealed that three-quarters of adults age 50-plus wish to remain in their current homes and communities as long as possible. To make this possibility a reality, many rely on family caregivers, who are the backbone of the care system in this country. According to the Rand Corporation, there are 5.5 million military and veteran caregivers in the United States. These uncompensated hidden heroes provide an estimated \$14 billion in service for wounded warriors and veterans each year. They need and deserve our support.

H.R.3581 would improve and enhance mental health support to family caregivers of veterans participating in the VA's family caregiver program. By providing grants to organizations focused on improving mental health outcomes of caregivers, the bill will provide community-based care to areas with high populations of military and veteran caregivers, areas with high rates of suicide among veterans, and other underserved military and veteran communities. Finally, the COPE Act requires a report to Congress on the need for mental health support for military and veteran caregivers, the options available for mental health support for caregivers at the VA, and barriers to mental health support for caregivers participating in VA caregiver programs.

AARP appreciates your work to improve the lives and health of veteran and military caregivers by ensuring they have the support they need while caring for our nation's veterans. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me or have your staff contact Emily Hetherington on our Government Affairs team at ehetherington@aarp.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in purple ink that reads "Bill Sweeney".

Bill Sweeney
Senior Vice President
Government Affairs