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TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF S.B. 297
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As a veteran of Operation Enduring Freedom and a combat veteran of Operation Iraqi Freedom, I wish to offer testimony in support of immediate passage of S.B. 297. It is an indisputable fact that no one returns from the wartime theater unscathed. For the 1.6 million veterans of both wars, it is estimated that 53 percent of them have redeployed to the home front with sufficient psychological trauma to necessitate mental health services. Given multiple deployments and relentless exposure to combat; the most critical predictive factor in the development Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) suggests a problem of tremendous magnitude and human suffering of untold proportions from wounds that do not bleed. According to the recent study released by the Rand Corporation, at least 20 percent of returning veterans have been diagnosed with PTSD, a figure highly likely to be considerably submerged by the fact that medically and psychologically necessary assessment and treatment remain unavailable, inadequate, inaccessible, and/or unaffordable. My own experience in the trenches unquestionably dictates that these numbers are grossly underestimated. This same study clearly indicates that the numbers of OIF and OEF veterans who have taken their lives by suicide may actually exceed the numbers of those killed in action. Given the protracted nature of the Wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the ensuing psychological mortality has unleashed an epidemic of psychological woundedness that is diminishing our fighting strength and even worse, destroying countless lives of those who wear the uniform and place their lives on the line in order to protect and defend our freedoms at any cost. The far reaching consequences for the estimated 300,000 war veterans enduring the terrible scourges of war, forcing them to face yet another secondary battleground in their own homeland while struggling to obtain critical mental health services, amounts to an unconscionable act.

Please prevent deceptive and unscrupulous practices within the insurance industry from denying coverage to those desperately in need of mental health treatment services for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. Please allow those of us who have served in time of war to receive a deservedly square deal.

Thank you.

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