

U.S. SENATOR BOB CASEY

 RANKING MEMBER *Special Committee on Aging*

Sen. Casey Opening Statement Hearing on Military Caregivers June 14, 2017

“Thank you, Chairman Collins. I appreciate you calling this hearing. And I want to thank you and so many others today.

“I want to thank, as well, our former colleague Senator Dole for your tireless work on behalf of military caregivers.

“Many of the brave men and women who have served our country in the armed forces return home bearing marks of that service.

“Joining us today are some of those who served bravely so that America can remain the land of the free.

“To paraphrase what my father once said, “we pray for military families and their loved ones serving around the globe; but we also pray for ourselves that we may be worthy of their valor.”

“Thank you for your service to our country.

“In order to better serve you, we are holding this hearing today—to recognize not only our veterans, but the hidden heroes of the military—the estimated 5.5 million military caregivers across the country.

“Military caregivers come in many different forms—spouses, family, friends, neighbors, and fellow veterans among them.

“The majority—roughly 60 percent—of these caregivers are women.

“We will hear from our witnesses that caring for a loved one can be stressful – physically, emotionally, and financially.

“We have made progress in helping caregivers, but as our witnesses will tell us, we have more to do more.

“We must strengthen the supports that are currently available and help more caregivers who need to access those supports.

“Whether a soldier served in Vietnam or Afghanistan, their caregivers should receive the same benefits and support from the VA.

“That is why I am a cosponsor of bipartisan legislation to expand the supports and services available to caregivers.

“Ensuring veterans and their families receive the care they need is also why I will continue to fight against efforts to decimate Medicaid.

“A report released by the Congressional Research Service explains that not all veterans are eligible for medical care from the VA.

“And many veterans cannot access VA services—for example, because they do not have a VA facility nearby. Sometimes, family members do not qualify for VA services.

“That is when other coverage options become important.

“Medicaid provides health care to more than 900,000 working-age veterans—340,000 of whom gained coverage following recent action by some states to expand Medicaid—and 660,000 veterans’ spouses.

“For these families who served our country – and for millions more children, individuals with disabilities, and seniors—Medicaid must be protected.

“Since Medicaid covers more than 900,000 veterans and 660,000 spouses, proposals to cut Medicaid and substantially change health care should be the subject of hearings.

“I look forward to hearing from our witnesses today about additional steps Congress can take to better support our nation’s military caregivers and their families.

“Thank you.”

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