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## **Eating Disorders Coalition Applauds Congressmen Seth Moulton (D-MA) & Walter Jones (R-NC) for Leading a Bipartisan Letter to Investigate Eating Disorders Prevention and Treatment for Servicemembers and Their Families**

WASHINGTON, D.C. (June 15, 2018) — Today, House of Representatives Armed Service Committee Members Congressman Seth Moulton (D-MA-6) and Walter Jones (R-NC-3) sent a [bipartisan letter](#) with 30 other Members of Congress to the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) to request a comprehensive study of the state of prevention and treatment of eating disorders for military members and their families by **December 14, 2018**. The letter requests GAO to assess issues including screening for and prevention of eating disorders within the entire life cycle of service; the number of servicemembers and families who have sought treatment; and the availability of eating disorder treatment for all levels of care across the nation.

“Approximately 30 million Americans suffer from an eating disorder at some point in their lifetime, and studies have shown that our servicemembers and veterans are affected at even higher rates than the civilian population,” said **Congressman Seth Moulton**. “It is estimated that up to 10% of male and female military personnel suffer from an eating disorder, and there is further reason to believe they are not receiving the care they need and deserve. Eating disorders can affect mental health and wellness in a way that could impact our military readiness. The GAO must conduct a comprehensive study of the Department of Defense’s TRICARE and Military Health System to evaluate the scope, prevention, and treatment of eating disorders affecting our military members and their families. Our servicemembers and veterans deserve the best health care in the world, and they should all have access to the healthcare they need, mental health included, especially those who have given up everything to serve our country.”

Signatories of this letter include the following Members of Congress from the House of Representatives Armed Services Committee: Seth Moulton (D-MA), Walter Jones (R-NC), Paul Cook (R-CA), Ruben Gallego (D-AZ), and Vicky Hartzler (R-MO). Signatories also include the following Members of Congress: Rep. Kathy Castor (D-FL), G.K. Butterfield (D-NC), Judy Chu (D-CA), Peter A. DeFazio (D-OR), Ted Deutch (D-FL), Debbie Dingell (D-MI), Marcia L. Fudge (D-OH), Denny Heck (D-WA), Jim

Himes (D-CT), Pramila Jayapal (D-WA), John Katko (R-NY), Derek Kilmer (D-WA), Dave Loebsack (D-IA), Zoe Lofgren (D-CA), Alan Lowenthal (D-CA), Doris Matsui (D-CA), Betty McCollum (D-MN), James P. McGovern (D-MA), Grace Napolitano (D-CA), Collin Peterson (D-MN), Chellie Pingree (D-ME), Mark Pocan (D-WI), David Price (D-NC), Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL), Kyrsten Sinema (D-AZ), Don Young (R-AK), and Don Beyer (D-VA).

“American servicemembers and their families affected by eating disorders have lived in the shadows for far too long,” said **Chase Bannister, Board Vice President of the Eating Disorders Coalition**. “We are encouraged by the leadership of Congressman Moulton and Congressman Jones in outflanking mental health stigma in our armed forces. For decades, our military and their families have faced a silent battle with eating disorders. This GAO study marks the end of that silence—and marks the beginning of hope.”

Eating disorders, including anorexia, bulimia, and binge eating disorder, affect 30 million Americans during their lifetime, including people of any age, gender, body size, socioeconomic status, and race.<sup>1</sup> Eating disorders have the highest mortality rate of any psychiatric illness<sup>2</sup>, with suicide rates being 23% higher than that of the general population.<sup>3</sup> Studies show that eating disorders affect our servicemembers and veterans at a higher rate than the civilian population.<sup>4 5 6</sup> Research suggests there may be an even greater prevalence rate than current estimates due to lack of reporting, with 34% of female active duty servicemembers and 20% of children of servicemembers scoring at risk for an eating disorder.<sup>7</sup> Additionally, a study of female veterans found significant relationships between increased risk of eating disorders and military members with history of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and sexual trauma.<sup>8</sup>

**The Eating Disorders Coalition (EDC)** is a Washington, D.C.-based, federal advocacy organization comprised of treatment providers, advocacy organizations, academics, parents of children with eating disorders and people experiencing eating disorders nationwide. Additional resources can also be found at [www.eatingdisorderscoalition.org](http://www.eatingdisorderscoalition.org).

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<sup>1</sup> Hudson, J. I., Hiripi, E., Pope, H. G., & Kessler, R. C. (2007). The prevalence and correlates of eating disorders in the National Comorbidity Survey Replication. *Biological Psychiatry*, 61(3), 348-358.

<sup>2</sup> Arcelus, J., Mitchell, A. J., Wales, J., & Nielsen, S. (2011). Mortality rates in patients with anorexia nervosa and other eating disorders. A meta-analysis of 36 studies. *Archives of General Psychiatry*, 68(7), 724-731.

<sup>3</sup> Harris, E. C. & Barraclough, B. (1997). Suicide as an outcome for mental disorders: a meta-analysis. *British Journal of Psychiatry*, 170(3), 205-228.

<sup>4</sup> Bodell, L. P., Forney, K. J., Keel, P. K., Gutierrez, P. M., & Joiner, T. E., Jr. (2014). Consequences of making weight: a review of eating disorder symptoms and diagnoses in the United States military. *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice*, 21(4), 398-409.

<sup>5</sup> Forman-Hoffman, V. L., Mengeling, M., Booth, B. M., Torner, J., & Sadler, A. G. (2012). Eating disorders, post-traumatic stress, and sexual trauma in women veterans. *Military Medicine*, 177(10), 1161-1168.

<sup>6</sup> Carlton et al. *Mil Med.* 2005;170:663-7; Lauder et al. *Med Science Sport Exer.* 1999;31:1265-71; McNulty. *Mil Med.* 1997;162:753-8; McNulty. *Mil Med.* 2001;166:53-8.

<sup>7</sup> Bodell, L. P., Forney, K. J., Keel, P. K., Gutierrez, P. M., & Joiner, T. E., Jr. (2014). Consequences of making weight: a review of eating disorder symptoms and diagnoses in the United States military. *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice*, 21(4), 398-409.; Waasdorp, C. E., Caboot, J. B., Robinson, C. A., Abraham, A. A., & Adelman, W. P. (2007). Screening Military Dependent Adolescent Females for Disordered Eating. *Military Medicine*, 172(9), 962-967. doi:10.7205/milmed.172.9.962

<sup>8</sup> Forman-Hoffman, V. L., Mengeling, M., Booth, B. M., Torner, J., & Sadler, A. G. (2012). Eating disorders, post-traumatic stress, and sexual trauma in women veterans. *Military Medicine*, 177(10), 1161-1168.