SERVE ACT (H.R. 1309/S. 194)
Supporting Eating Disorders Recovery Through Vital Expansion

The Facts on Eating Disorders

- Number of Americans affected by eating disorders: 28.8 million
- One death every 52 minutes
- Yearly cost of untreated eating disorders: $64.7 billion for the U.S. economy, $23.5 billion for families & individuals
- Suicide rate for those affected by eating disorders: 23x higher than expected rate

Eating Disorders in the Military & Military Families

- Servicemembers: Higher prevalence rate of eating disorders in the military compared to the civilian population, due to combat exposure, strict weight and physical fitness requirements, and other unique risk factors
- PTSD/MST: Studies show that there is a strong correlation between PTSD, military sexual trauma, and eating disorders
- Diagnoses of eating disorders among military personnel: 26% in 2013, 20% in 2016
- Children of servicemembers: 21% have symptoms of an eating disorder
- Spouses of servicemembers: 26% have symptoms of an eating disorder
- These rates are 3 times that of their civilian peers

Serve Act Increases Identification and Treatment of Eating Disorders for Servicemembers and Their Families

Issue #1: Age Limit on Care for Military Families

- Issue:
  - Military family members cannot receive higher levels of evidence-based eating disorders treatment, called residential treatment, if they are over the age of 20. Those affected by substance use disorder are not faced with the same age restriction.

- Solution:
  - Extend the age limit for military family members to access residential eating disorders care from 20 to the Medicare-eligibility age.

Issue #2: Defense Health Board Report Recommended Systematic Protocols for Screening and Treatment of Eating Disorders

- Issue:
  - The Defense Health Board report found that women in the armed forces are disproportionately impacted by eating disorders, affecting military readiness and health. The report also noted, “variability in screening protocols results in stark differences in reported prevalence of diagnosed eating disorders.”

- Solution:
  - Require the Secretary of Defense to take steps to identify, treat, and rehabilitate servicemembers affected by eating disorders, as was done for substance use disorder.
  - Require the DoD and VA to establish clinical practice guidelines for eating disorders treatment, which have been created for numerous other medical and mental health conditions.

Serve Act Sponsors

SASC Sponsors:
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- Senator Thom Tillis

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