



Eating Disorders Coalition Applauds Bipartisan Introduction of the SERVE Act—Legislation Addressing Eating Disorders Treatment for Military Members and Families

WASHINGTON, D.C. (May 15, 2019) – Military members and their families have higher prevalence rates of eating disorders than the civilian population, with an estimated up to 7-8% of servicemembers affected by this serious mental illness. Particularly, research shows that 34% of female active-duty servicemembers and 20% of female adolescent dependents are at risk of an eating disorder, and 16% of female veterans are affected by an eating disorder. The high mortality rate and strong correlation between post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), military sexual trauma, and eating disorders among servicemembers and their families demonstrates an alarming need in Congress to ensure early intervention and access to treatment for this life-threatening disorder.

The Eating Disorders Coalition praises U.S. Congressmen and veterans **Seth Moulton** (D-MA-06) and **Brian Mast** (R-FL-18) for introducing the **Supporting Eating Disorders Recovery through Vital Expansion Act (SERVE) Act** of 2019 to ensure our nation’s servicemembers and their families have access to comprehensive eating disorders treatment under the TRICARE health insurance program.

“As a former servicemember and current military spouse with a history of anorexia and bulimia, I have experienced the challenges that the military faces in wanting to understand the complexity of treating this illness with no concept of where to start,” said **Chandler Rand, who served as a Lance Corporal in the United States Marine Corps**. “The SERVE Act will help guide our military in supporting the recovery process for active duty personnel and their families wherein eating disorders are highly prevalent.”

Today’s introduction of the bipartisan **SERVE Act** is a crucial step in bringing eating disorders out of the shadows for the military population. If passed, the bill would eliminate age restrictions on receiving eating disorders treatment for military spouses and children, remove barriers to treatment at all levels of care, and encourage training and resources for Commanding Officers and Supervisors to help identify the signs and symptoms of eating disorders and other mental illnesses.

“Service members and their families deserve the best possible health care, and it’s up to Congress to make that happen,” **Moulton said**. “It is hard to talk about eating disorders and mental health, and especially hard within the military community. We hope leadership from Congress on the SERVE Act starts a broader conversation that helps people seek and receive help.”

“Serving in the military takes a serious toll on the mental and physical health of everyone who puts on the uniform,” **Mast said**. “Expanding access to treatment facilities and improving the way we take care of service members is critical to making sure our brothers and sisters in arms receive the best care our country has to offer.”

Eating disorders affect 30 million Americans during their lifetime and have the second highest mortality rate of any psychiatric illness, second to opioid abuse. The disorder does not discriminate, and affects people of all genders, ages, races, sizes, sexual orientations, ethnicities, and socioeconomic statuses. Eating disorders are complex, biologically-based illnesses that include the specific disorders of anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa, binge eating disorder, avoidant/restrictive food intake disorder, and other specified feeding or eating disorders as recognized by the American Psychiatric Association’s DSM 5. With interventions at the appropriate durations and levels of care, eating disorders can be successfully treated to recovery.

The Eating Disorders Coalition for Research, Policy & Action (EDC) is a Washington, DC-based, federal advocacy organization comprised of advocacy organizations, academics, treatment providers, family/loved ones of children with eating disorders and people experiencing eating disorders nationwide. The EDC advances the recognition of eating disorders as a public health priority throughout the United States. EDC member organizations include the Academy for Eating Disorders, Alliance for Eating Disorders Awareness, Aloria Health, Bannister Consultancy, Cambridge Eating Disorder Center, Center for Change, Center for Eating Disorders at Sheppard Pratt, Clementine, Donahue Foundation, Eating Disorder Coalition of Iowa (EDCI), Eating Disorders Center at Rogers Memorial Hospital, Eating Disorder Hope, Eating Disorder Therapy LA, Eating Recovery Center, The Emily Program, Families Empowered and Supporting Treatment of Eating Disorders (F.E.A.S.T.), Focus Treatment Center, Gail R. Schoenbach FREED Foundation, International Association of Eating Disorders Professionals (iaedep), International Federation of Eating Disorders Dietitians, Laureate Eating Disorders Program, Monte Nido, Mothers Against Eating Disorders,

Mirasol Eating Disorder Recovery Center, Moonshadow's Spirit, Multi-Service Eating Disorders Association, National Eating Disorders Association (NEDA), The National Association of Anorexia Nervosa and Associated Eating Disorders, Oliver-Pyatt Centers, Park Nicollet Melrose Center, Project HEAL, Reasons Eating Disorder Center, Renfrew Center, Residential Eating Disorders Consortium, Rosewood Center for Eating Disorders, Stay Strong Virginia, Strategic Training Initiative for the Prevention of Eating Disorders (STRIPED), Timberline Knolls, Veritas Collaborative, Walden Behavioral Care, Wrobel & Smith PLLP, and WithAll. Additional resources can also be found at www.eatingdisorderscoalition.org.###

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