

April 8, 2025

The Honorable Doug Collins
Secretary
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Mr. Secretary:

We write today to voice our strong opposition to any effort to rescind or replace the final rule entitled “Reproductive Health Services,” which ensures veterans, and their eligible family members and caregivers, can access abortion care and counseling through the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). It is our government’s solemn promise to care for our veterans’ health and well-being and protect their fundamental freedoms, as they have fought to protect ours. That promise includes ensuring veterans and their loved ones have access to the full spectrum of reproductive healthcare, including abortion care.

Prior to the implementation of this rule, which was issued as an Interim Final Rule in September 2022, and finalized in March 2024, VA’s medical benefits package did not permit abortion care or counseling in any circumstance. As a result of this ban, veterans who needed abortion care, including those whose lives were at risk, were denied access to this needed healthcare service. In issuing the Reproductive Health Services rule, VA rightly found that providing access to reproductive healthcare for veterans was necessary to uphold its statutory obligation to “promote, preserve, or restore” the health of veterans.¹

Veterans have long faced significant barriers to accessing reproductive healthcare, but the public health crisis created by the June 2022 reversal of *Roe v. Wade* has created an unprecedented level of confusion, chaos, and fear. The draconian abortion bans and restrictions that states have implemented in the aftermath of the decision have undermined the rights and bodily autonomy of pregnant veterans across this country. Your department, in issuing the Reproductive Health Services rule, recognized the urgency required to protect veterans’ health and well-being by providing abortion counseling, as well as abortion care in cases of rape, incest, or life or health endangerment of the pregnant person. Without this rule, pregnant veterans in states that ban abortion would have been denied access to needed care at VA and forced to travel long distances to access urgently needed healthcare, including life-saving care.

Ensuring this rule stays in place in its current form is crucial to safeguarding the health and well-being of our veterans and their families and caregivers, especially given the unique challenges veterans face, including experiencing post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD),² a higher risk of suicide,³ and military sexual trauma.⁴ However, we are gravely concerned about language in Project 2025 that urges VA to “rescind all departmental clinical policy directives that are

¹Department of Veterans Affairs, *Reproductive Health Services*, 89 Fed. Reg. 15451 (March 4, 2024) ([final rule](#)).

²Department of Veterans Affairs, National Center for PTSD, *How Common is PTSD in Veterans?* (January 10, 2025) (https://www.ptsd.va.gov/understand/common/common_veterans.asp).

contrary to the principles of conservative governance starting with abortion services.”⁵ Despite President Donald Trump’s insistence that he is in no way associated with Project 2025, it appears that your department is poised to follow this plan and roll back access to reproductive healthcare for our veterans and their loved ones.⁶ As of the date of this letter, according to the Office of Management and Budget’s Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs, an Interim Final Rule with the same title as the 2022 rule is pending regulatory review.⁷ An Interim Final Rule that restricts access to abortion for veterans would pose an immediate and grave danger for veterans and deprive them, without proper notice, of the benefits they have earned and the healthcare they need.

The Reproductive Health Services rule, as finalized in March 2024, crucially recognized that veterans deserve the freedom to make their own decisions about their health, bodies, and futures—free from interference from politicians or judges. To ensure our veterans continue to have access to the reproductive healthcare they need, we demand your agency withdraw any pending rule and refrain from issuing future rules that would rescind or restrict access to abortion care and counseling at VA.


On behalf of the veterans we represent, we thank you for your immediate response to this letter.

Sincerely,

Sincerely,



Maxine Dexter
Member of Congress



Julia Brownley
Member of Congress



Kelly Morrison
Member of Congress

³Department of Veterans Affairs, *2024 National Veteran Suicide Prevention Annual Report, Part 2 of 2: Report Findings* (Dec. 19, 2024) (https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/docs/data-sheets/2024/2024-Annual-Report-Part-2-of-2_508.pdf).

⁴Department of Defense Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office, *Department of Defense Annual Report on Sexual Assault in the Military, Fiscal Year 2023. Appendix B: Statistical Data on Sexual Assault* (May 14, 2024) (https://www.sapr.mil/sites/default/files/public/docs/reports/AR/FY23/FY23_Appendix_B.pdf).

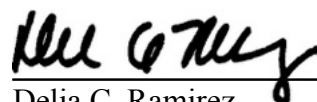
⁵Project 2025 Presidential Transition Project, *Mandate for Leadership: The Conservative Promise* (April 2023) (https://static.project2025.org/2025_MandateForLeadership_FULL.pdf).

⁶*WATCH: ‘I have nothing to do with Project 2025,’ Trump says*, PBS NewsHour (Sept. 10, 2024) (<https://www.pbs.org/newshour/politics/watch-i-have-nothing-to-do-with-project-2025-trump-says>).

⁷Office of Management and Budget, Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs (March 5, 2025) (<https://www.reginfo.gov/public/do/eoDetails?rrid=872014>).



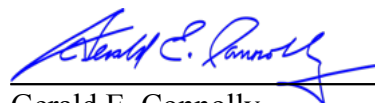
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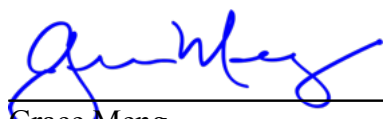
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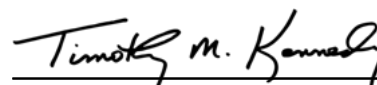
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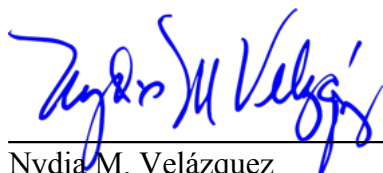
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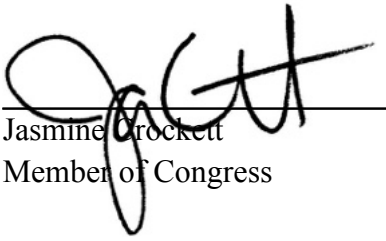
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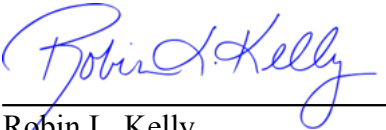
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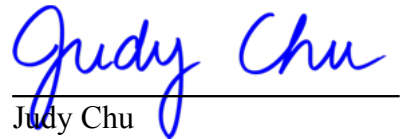
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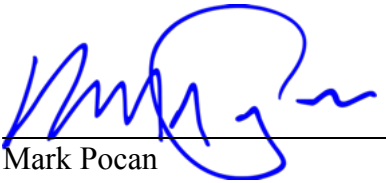
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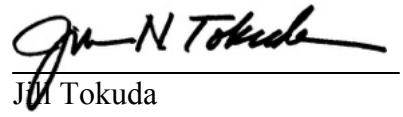
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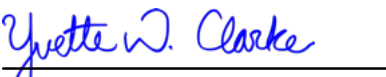
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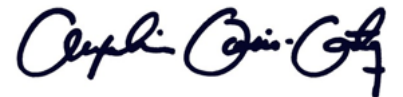
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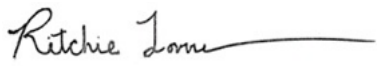
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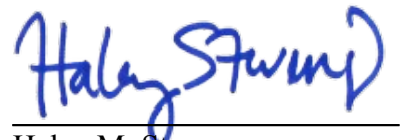
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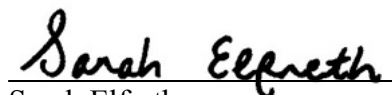
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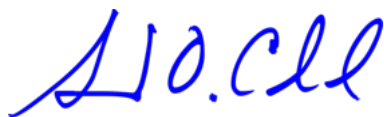
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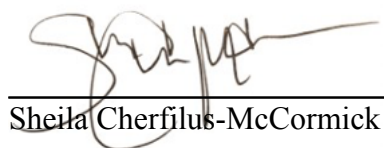
Andrea Salinas
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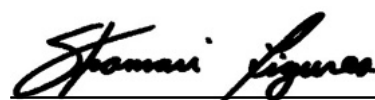
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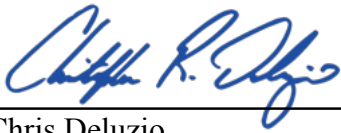
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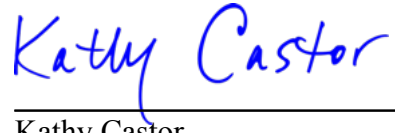
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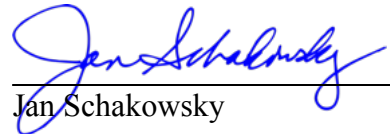
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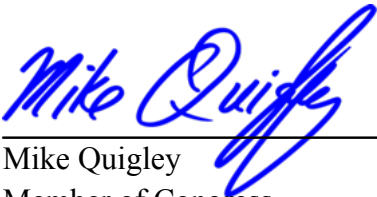
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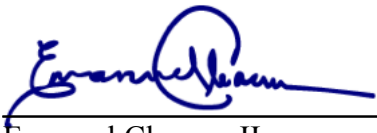
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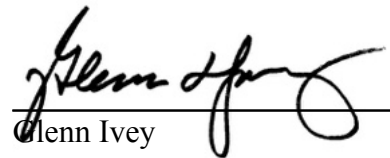
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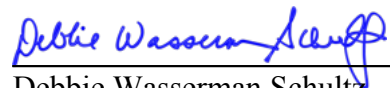
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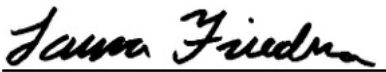
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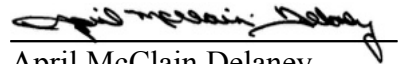
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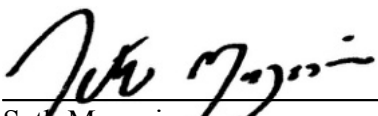
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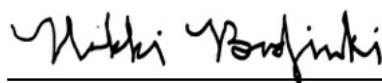
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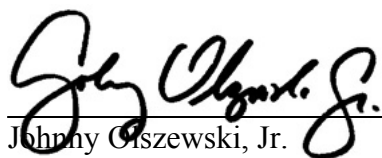
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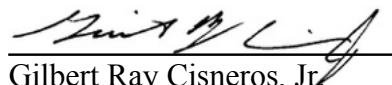
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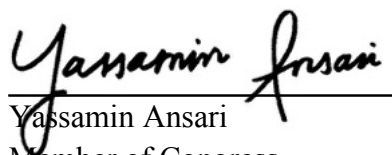
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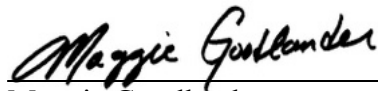
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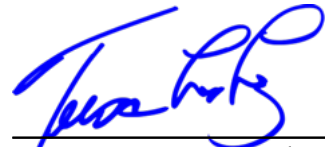
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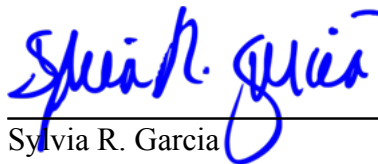
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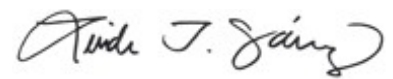
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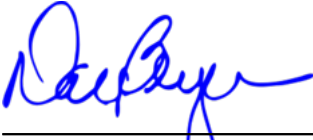
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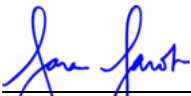
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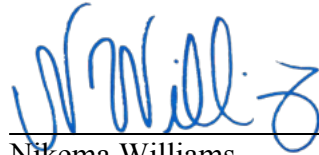
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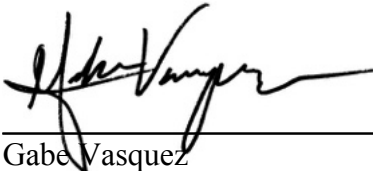
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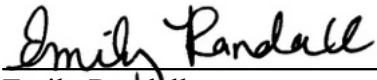
Nanette Diaz Barragán
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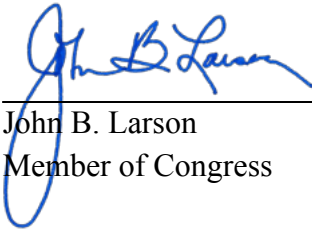
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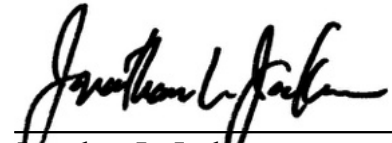
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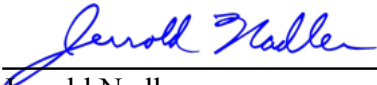
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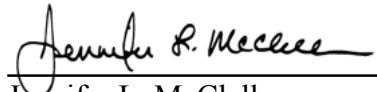
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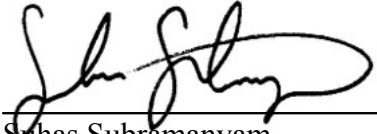
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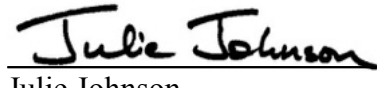
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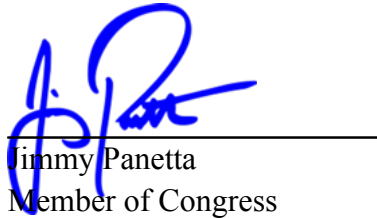
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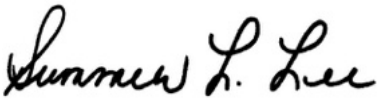
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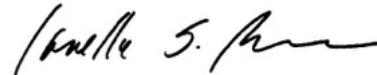
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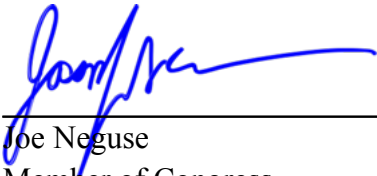
Herbert C. Conaway, Jr.
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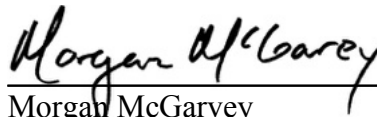
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