

Kaine & Colleagues Introduce Bipartisan Bill To Strengthen Support For Disabled Veterans And Young Caregivers

Washington, D.C. – U.S. Senator Tim Kaine, a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, joined Senators Patty Murray (D-WA) and John Boozman (R-AR) in reintroducing the Helping Heroes Act of 2023, legislation to support the families of disabled veterans, including children who take on caregiving roles. The Helping Heroes Act would provide critical support and assistance in accessing local, state, and federal resources to the approximately 2.3 million children under the age of 18 living in a household with a disabled veteran.

“Virginia is home to many of our country’s veterans, who have sacrificed so much in service to our nation,” said Kaine. “The families of Virginia’s disabled veterans often take on a huge responsibility caring for their loved ones, and this bill would help provide them with the support they need.”

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) currently has limited authority to support veteran families with healthy development, especially when it comes to children who take on these caregiving roles. This bill would begin to address those gaps by helping veteran families benefit from access to mental health care, peer support, and recreational opportunities, and other experiences that can help these children lead healthier lives.

The Helping Heroes Act of 2023 would help meet the unmet needs of these children and would:

- Require a full-time Family Coordinator at each VA medical center to assess the needs of veteran families in the area and refer them to available local, state, and federal resources;
- Establish a Family

Support Program to provide supportive services to eligible family members of disabled veterans;

- Ensure transition assistance curriculum includes information on services for children in veteran families adjusting from Active Duty to veteran status;
- And require VA to collect data on the experiences of disabled veteran families to better identify and understand their needs.

Joining Kaine, Murray, and Boozman in cosponsoring the bill are Senators Dick Durbin (D-IL), Jack Reed (D-RI), Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH), Bernie Sanders (I-VT), Ron Wyden (D-OR), and Lisa Murkowski (R-AK).

Kaine has long supported military families and has advocated for improved access to mental health care for servicemembers and veterans. This week, Kaine introduced the Military Spouse Hiring Act, which would amend the tax code to incentivize businesses to hire military spouses.