



Dear Representatives Castellano and Sanchez and Senator Campos,

The Veterans and Military Families Caucus supports your legislation **HB 90/SB 77 - Epi Duran Crisis Treatment Center** and **HB 50/SB 78 Northern NM Integrated Substance Abuse**.

The 2023 Veterans Profile states that there were **139,347 veterans living in New Mexico as of 2021**. Veterans represented **8.6 percent of the civilian population 18 and older** in our state. Add to that the number of active duty military families in our state, National Guard families, and retired military and veteran family members that also may need access to treatment.

This legislation is a critical step in providing access to treatment. New Mexico is extremely understaffed and underfunded in the area of behavioral health services.

According to <https://rehabnet.com/veterans/new-mexico/>

“Military service members and veterans are often exposed to **situations that are highly traumatic and stressful**. These are situations that can cause life-long mental and physical injuries, which are **risk factors for alcohol and drug abuse**.

Mental health issues also frequently lead veterans to become addicted to drugs and alcohol, which is a big factor in why **substance abuse is common among veterans**.

Statistics on veteran substance abuse include:

- Around **11% of veterans who visit a medical facility run by the VA** have a substance use disorder.
- More than **20% of veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder** also have a substance use disorder.
- **4 out of 5 veterans have alcoholism.**
- **25% of veterans use illicit drugs.**
- **Over 1 in 10 veterans who received opioids for pain management developed an addiction.**
- More than **10% of veteran treatment admissions in 2019 were for heroin use.**
- **Veterans living with substance use disorders are more than twice as likely to die by suicide than the civilian population.**”

The VMFC Caucus has supported health care expansion in the past few years and will continue to do so. Please **share this letter of support with your colleagues** in committees as you advance the legislation.

If you have any questions about how this legislation benefits us or how we can support your efforts in this regard, please contact us.

Respectfully,



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