



Depression and Bipolar
Support Alliance

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DBSA ENDORSES INTRODUCTION OF VETERAN PEER SPECIALIST ACT OF 2021 IN CONGRESS

The Legislation Would Expand Peer Specialist Support Services
To Aid Veterans Living with Mood Disorders

CHICAGO, June 21, 2021— The Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance (DBSA) today endorsed the introduction in Congress of the Veteran Peer Specialist Act of 2021, new legislation that is supported by the mental health advocacy organization to expand peer specialist services for veterans living with mood disorders.

The Veteran Peer Specialist Act was introduced in Congress by U.S. Senators Richard Blumenthal (D-CT) and Roy Blunt (R-MO), and U.S. Representatives Scott Peters (D-CA), Colin Allred (D-TX), and Tracey Mann (R-KS). The bipartisan legislation would expand the highly successful peer specialist program to all Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) medical centers over the next five years, prioritizing expansion to rural areas, areas not near an active military installation, and the hiring of peer specialists that reflect the racial and ethnic demographics of the veteran population.

“As an organization whose mission is grounded in the purpose of offering peer-based, wellness-oriented support and empowering services and resources when people need them, we are extremely gratified to see the Veteran Peer Specialist Act introduced to Congress,” said Michael Pollock, Chief Executive Officer of DBSA. “Peer specialists play a vital role in combatting risks of veteran suicide and treating mental health conditions. These specialists support fellow veterans and encourage recovery by helping them access health services and navigate the VA health care system, while also teaching coping and positive health-affirming behaviors. We are proud to support the legislation and look forward to its eventual passage.”

DBSA’s support of the Veteran Peer Specialist Act is part of an organization-wide commitment to expand peer specialist services for veterans. Since 2020, DBSA has partnered with several foundations to increase the number of Veteran Peer Specialist training courses offered to veterans. Passing the course puts the veterans on a path towards becoming a certified veteran peer specialist which includes one year of experience to meet certification requirements.

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The Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance is a leading national organization focusing on mood disorders, including depression and bipolar disorder, which affect over 21 million Americans, account for over 50% of the nation’s suicides every year, and cost \$23 billion in lost workdays and other workplace losses. Through its extensive online and print resources and nearly 500 support groups, DBSA reaches millions of people each year with in-person and online peer support.

For more information, please visit <http://www.DBSAlliance.org> or call (800) 826-3632.