July 10, 2018

The Honorable John McCain  
Chairman, Armed Services Committee  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mac Thornberry  
Chairman, Armed Services Committee  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Jack Reed  
Ranking Member, Armed Services Committee  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Adam Smith  
Ranking Member, Armed Services Committee  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Messrs. Chairmen and Ranking Members:

The Military Coalition (TMC), a consortium of uniformed services and veterans’ associations representing more than 5.5 million currently serving, retired, veterans and their families and survivors, thank you and the committees for your efforts to protect the interests of servicemembers in the John S. McCain National Defense Authorization Act for FY2019 (NDAA).

We greatly appreciate your committee’s efforts to protect the quality of life for military personnel, future retirees, and their families by supporting the 2.6% pay raise at ECI and maintaining current calculations for basic allowance for housing.

We also strongly support your commitment to increase military personnel end strengths in both the active and reserve components of the services in order to meet national security strategy requirements and dwell-time needs as our forces prepare for and respond to security challenges around the globe.

We strongly oppose Section 701 of S. 2987. This provision eliminates the grandfathering for beneficiaries enrolled in TRICARE prior to January 1, 2018 with the intent to establish a single co-payment structure for all beneficiaries to “correct an inequity.”

This provision, as written, not only disregards the intent of the FY17 NDAA, which was to reflect the value of many years of service. It also imposes yet another round of significant health care cost increases on those who served a full career in uniform and have already endured cost increases following the Defense Health Agency’s unilateral decision last year to implement
changes to the fee table last year.

The cumulative impact of higher copays, enrollment fees, higher catastrophic caps and a new non-network deductible would significantly erode the value of the health care benefit earned over many years of service and sacrifice.

Also disappointing is that Section 701 does nothing to address the steep copays for physical, speech and occupational therapies, as well as mental health visits, a critical flaw in the new TRICARE copay construct.

Beneficiaries continue to have negative experiences with the managed care support contract transitions which makes this increase even more egregious. It is apparent to us additional fees collected are not being used to maintain or improve the military health care system, but are instead being used to fund readiness or other unspecified priorities.

For these reasons, and for the sake of all those current beneficiaries who have faithfully served this country, we respectfully ask you not to include Section 701 in the final version of the John S. McCain National Defense Authorization Act for FY2019.

Sincerely,
The Military Coalition.
(signatures enclosed)
Air Force Association

Air Force Sergeants Association

Air Force Women Officers Associated

AMVETS

AirMed, the Society of Federal Health Professionals

Association of the United States Army

Association of the United States Navy

Commissioned Officers Assn. of the US Public Health Service, Inc

CWOA, US Coast Guard

Fleet Reserve Association

Marine Corps League

Marine Corps Reserve Association

Military Officers Association of America

Military Order of the Purple Heart

National Military Family Association

Reserve Officers Association

Service Women's Action Network

The Military Chaplains Assn. of the USA

The Retired Enlisted Assn.

Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors

USCG Chief Petty Officers Assn.

US Army Warrant Officers Assn.

Veterans of Foreign Wars of the US

Vietnam Veterans of America

Wounded Warrior Project