



August 24, 2020

The Honorable Steve Stivers
15th Congressional District of Ohio
2234 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Stivers,

On behalf of the 2.2 million members of AMAC – Association of Mature American Citizens, including over 6,401 residing in OH-15, I write to offer our support for H.R. 4305, the *PAWS for Veterans Therapy Act*.

Many of AMAC's members are veterans or have family members who are veterans, and we are vested in ensuring that they receive all due acknowledgement for the sacrifices they have made on behalf of our freedoms. Our veterans struggling with their mental health deserve focused and comprehensive treatment and therapy.

Approximately 20 combat veterans a day commit suicide – a rising and underreported national epidemic in our country. Numerous studies have estimated that roughly 20 percent of U.S. veterans who served in Iraq and 11 percent who served in Afghanistan suffer from Post-Traumatic Stress (PTS). PTS – seen as an invisible wound of war, continues to pose significant physical, mental, emotional, psychological, health and overall wellness challenges to veterans.

H.R. 4305 creates a five-year pilot program within the Department of Veterans' Affairs (VA) giving veterans access to an alternative therapy option by working with service dogs. Specifically, the VA would partner with non-profit organizations that provide service dog training therapy to veterans affected with PTS. Veterans who complete the program may adopt their dogs to continue therapy and support.

Thank you, Congressman Stivers for working to provide our nation's heroes with the best care our country has to offer. Your legislation is an effective response in minimizing symptoms of PTS and gives our veterans a sense of purpose, hope, increased social confidence, safety, empowerment, responsibility, and independence – all necessary to reintegrate within civilian society. No veteran should ever be left untreated. AMAC appreciates your efforts and is pleased to offer our organization's full support for H.R. 4305, the *PAWS for Veterans Therapy Act*.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bob Carlston". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

President, AMAC Action