



July 3, 2014

Honorable Chuck Hagel  
Secretary of Defense  
The Pentagon  
Washington DC 20301

Dear Mr. Secretary:

Thank you for addressing the challenges of access, safety and quality of care with a comprehensive review of the military healthcare system (MHS). While the MHS generally provides good services and coverage, the health plan often adopts policies and practices from Medicare that do not address the unique healthcare needs of children, and those disconnects affect access, safety and quality of care.

Because children grow and develop rapidly, challenges and barriers to diagnosis and related treatments have a direct effect on a child's outcome and developmental trajectory, and the concerns are exacerbated for children with special and complex health needs.

As you know, the undersigned organizations strongly support the current "TRICARE for Kids" review of pediatric care prescribed by Section 735 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2013, which recognizes that children's healthcare needs and standards of care are different than those of adults. To that end, the stakeholder group of pediatric healthcare advocacy and professional organizations, disability advocacy groups, military family advocacy organizations, and representatives of military families has come together to provide thoughtful and expert input for consideration and looks forward to the expected release of the report in a few weeks.

Because healthcare is not a "one size fits all" matter, no review of the MHS would be complete without specifically considering the unique health needs of children. Additionally, the quality of the care provided to military children impacts the entire family's well-being. Therefore, we urge you to also carefully consider and integrate the feedback and recommendations provided pursuant to the Section 735 "TRICARE for Kids" as part of the larger MHS review initiative in order to protect and improve children's healthcare coverage, access and quality.

We appreciate your ongoing efforts to improve the military healthcare system to ensure military service members and their families receive the "highest quality of healthcare possible wherever they are deployed or stationed." Please know that our organizations stand ready to provide assistance or insight, and as your staff works to complete its review, they may contact Kara Oakley, who serves as chairperson of the TRICARE for Kids stakeholder group, anytime at 202.744.9980.

Sincerely,

American Academy of Pediatrics  
Autism Speaks  
Children's Hospital Association  
Easter Seals  
March of Dimes  
Military Kids Matter  
Military Officers Association of America  
Military Special Needs Network  
Military Spouse Mental Health Professionals Network  
National Military Family Association  
Paralyzed Veterans of America  
VetsFirst, a program of United Spinal Association

Attachments:

Copies of "TRICARE for Kids" comments provided to DoD by above organizations pursuant to Sec. 735 NDAA 2013