



VETERANS CANNABIS COALITION
1405 S Fern St. #274, Arlington, VA 22202

August 6, 2018

The Honorable Charlie Crist
427 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Drew Ferguson
1032 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Crist and Congressman Ferguson,

The Veterans Cannabis Coalition, a non-profit advocacy organization dedicated to bringing equal access to medicinal cannabis for all veterans of the United States Armed Forces and seeing cannabis-derived medications developed by the Department of Veterans Affairs, writes to express support for the Fairness in Federal Drug Testing Under State Laws Act.

With adult-use and/or medicinal cannabis laws in more than 3/5 of states in the U.S., the federal government's continued prohibition of cannabis constitutes a major barrier for otherwise law-abiding citizens to seek employment in executive branch agencies. Veterans, in particular—22% of which, according to a late 2017 survey released by the American Legion, use cannabis to treat a service-connected disability—face outsized discrimination in federal employment for following a doctor's recommendation and treating themselves with a very low-risk, non-toxic, and exceedingly beneficial substance.

Consider just the non-retired veteran population, who have collectively demonstrated courage, dedication, and service to country and who often possess rare or expensive-to-replicate knowledge or skills. But the value that veterans bring to continuing government service has often come at a great personal cost to the individual, resulting in injuries or chronic conditions that require pharmaceuticals to manage. Three and half million veterans have served in the longest period of conflict in our nation's history, and many of them have come home looking for help only to be loaded up with pills and sent on their way.

This status quo of treating complex and intertwined medical issues with powerful and inappropriate drugs continues to play a major role in veteran suicide. We have personally heard from hundreds of veterans of all eras about how the drugs the VA and private health pushes on them destroys their quality of life and offers only numbness and disconnection rather than recovery. Cannabis, on the other hand, can sometimes feel like a lifesaver—being finally able to relax, sleep, and start to unpack all the trauma they have experienced is the first step for many veterans toward healing.

In an era of dropping enlistment in the armed forces after nearly a generation of constant war, where public support for veterans is high but knowledge of the military is very low, it is a strike against both our national security and the country's commitment to veteran employment to prevent hiring of qualified individuals based on their state-compliant use of cannabis. In our eyes, it is a slap in the face of veterans who volunteered to serve, were sent in to harm's way, and

then criminalized for using a low-risk and often effective treatment for the damage they accrued carrying this country's flag.

We appreciate your bipartisan leadership on this issue because it is so essential. Self-care and gainful employment are critical components of life-long success for not just veterans but all Americans. For the federal government to essentially punish citizens, who are under the protection of their state laws, for exercising their right to care for themselves is an affront to personal liberty. Thank you for your continuing work, and we look forward to supporting this bill and future efforts addressing flaws and discrepancies in federal law.

[Original Signed]

Eric Goepel
Founder, Veterans Cannabis Coalition

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Bill Ferguson
Co-Founder, Veterans Cannabis Coalition