July 17, 2014

The Honorable Bernie Sanders  The Honorable Jeff Miller  
Chairman  Chairman  
Senate Committee on Veterans’ Affairs  House Committee on Veterans’ Affairs  
United States Senate  United States House of Representatives  

The Honorable Richard Burr  The Honorable Mike Michaud  
Ranking Member  Ranking Member  
Senate Committee on Veterans’ Affairs  House Committee on Veterans’ Affairs  
United States Senate  United States House of Representatives  

Dear Chairman Sanders, Chairman Miller, Ranking Member Burr, and Ranking Member Michaud:

On behalf of the American Herbal Products Association (AHPA), I am writing to express strong support for expanding complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) options to our nation’s veterans. Specifically, I am requesting that the recently convened Conference Committee to finalize legislation to improve veterans’ health care access include the provisions of H.R. 4887, “The Expanding Care for Veterans Act,” which was introduced in the House of Representatives by Representative Julia Brownley on June 18, 2014.

AHPA is a national trade association that represents the herbal products industry. AHPA is comprised of more than 300 domestic and foreign companies doing business as growers, processors, manufacturers, and marketers of herbs and botanical and herbal products, including foods, dietary supplements, cosmetics, and non-prescription drugs. AHPA’s mission is to promote the responsible commerce of herbal products.

AHPA members are supportive of initiatives that support research, education, and delivery of CAM for veterans, which is what H.R. 4887 would accomplish. Specifically, the measure requires the Veterans Administration (VA) to conduct research and develop a plan for inclusion of CAM; carry out a program for 3 years to “assess the feasibility and advisability of integrating [CAM services] with other health care services” provided by VA medical centers; and study any barriers that exist to receiving and administering CAM services in VA facilities.

While the VA is to be commended for taking initial steps to make CAM more widely available to veterans, reports have shown that more and more veterans are going outside the VA health system to use complementary and alternative medicine therapies to treat pain and mental health conditions while reducing their dependence on narcotics.
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H.R. 4887 is a good step toward expanding access to CAM for our nation’s veterans. I once again ask that you strongly consider including the provisions of this legislation in the final VA health care access and accountability measure currently before your Conference Committee.

Thank you for your commitment to improving the health care system for U.S. veterans, and for serious consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Michael McGuffin
President, American Herbal Products Association

Cc: Sen. John Rockefeller  
    Sen. Patty Murray  
    Sen. Sherrod Brown  
    Sen. Jon Tester  
    Sen. Mark Begich  
    Sen. Richard Blumenthal  
    Sen. Mazie Hirono  
    Sen. Johnny Isakson  
    Sen. Mike Johanns  
    Sen. John McCain  
    Sen. Tom Coburn  
    Sen. Marco Rubio  
    Rep. Doug Lamborn  
    Rep. Phil Roe  
    Rep. Bill Flores  
    Rep. Dan Benishek  
    Rep. Mike Coffman  
    Rep. Jackie Walorski  
    Rep. Brad Wenstrup  
    Rep. Corrine Brown  
    Rep. Mark Takano  
    Rep. Julie Brownley  
    Rep. Ann Kirkpatrick  
    Rep. Tim Walz