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Coffman Introduces the 'MIND' Act of 2018 *Directs VA to Establish Centers for Alzheimer's Research*

Washington, D.C. – Today, U.S. Representative Mike Coffman (R-CO) was joined by his colleagues Rep. Pete Sessions (R-TX) and Rep. Cathy McMorris Rodgers (R-WA) to introduce H.R. 5191, the '*Medical Improvement of Neurodegenerative Diseases (MIND) Act of 2018*'. H.R. 5191 directs the Department of Veterans' Affairs (VA) to establish Alzheimer's disease research, education, and clinical centers and requires a scientific specialization in research likely to be transformative, including the connection between Down syndrome and Alzheimer's Disease.

"Currently, the VA estimates that about 750,000 veterans suffer from Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia. When the average age of our nation's veterans is 58 years, and slowly increasing, delivering and paying for this healthcare presents a challenge. Clearly, the VA needs to aggressively pursue promising scientific research efforts to treat or cure Alzheimer's disease. Our veterans deserve it, said Rep. Mike Coffman. "Those with Down syndrome have a significantly increased risk of developing Alzheimer's. Studying this connection, will help the VA better understand how Alzheimer's progresses, why certain people are more susceptible to the disease, and perhaps lead to breakthrough treatments for Alzheimer's and Down Syndrome."

Currently the VA spends upwards of \$31 million dollars on Alzheimer's research, but none of it focuses on the connection with Down syndrome. Current studies suggest that more than 50% of those with Down syndrome will eventually suffer from Alzheimer's or a type of dementia. The bill directs the VA to designate at least 3 VA healthcare facilities to focus on Alzheimer's research, education and clinical activities. Additionally, it requires a peer review panel to assess the scientific and clinical merit of proposals for these centers.

"As the proud father of a young man with Down syndrome, I have seen first-hand the relationship between Down syndrome and Alzheimer's. There is no question that we need to dedicate resources to research this important issue and study it closely." Said Rep. Pete Sessions, "I proudly support this important measure so the VA can work with the NIH to learn more about this issue and develop solutions to create a better future for all individuals with Down syndrome"

Requirements for facility designation include:

- Accredited medical schools affiliated with the VA that provides education and training in innovative diagnosis and treatment for neurodegenerative diseases.
- An advisory committee composed of Veterans and VA healthcare and research representatives
- The capability to develop a national repository in the VA healthcare system for the collection of data on services delivered to veterans seeking care for neurodegenerative diseases.

“Research into Down Syndrome can help unlock the answers to many other common health challenges like Alzheimer’s. What is it about that extra 21st chromosome that those with Down Syndrome have? Almost every individual with Down Syndrome develops Alzheimer’s, but they don’t suffer from other health risks like heart attack or solid tumor cancers. I want America to lead the world in medical innovation, and our veterans deserve the best possible care through the VA. This bill will allow the VA to continue the important research they do, while requiring that research to include this important connection to the 21st chromosome. This research can open the door for new breakthroughs, and I’m proud to join Rep. Mike Coffman and Rep. Pete Sessions to introduce the MIND Act to find cures for our veterans.” Added **Rep. Cathy McMorris Rodgers**.

“We applaud Rep. Mike Coffman for his leadership on this issue and we are grateful for Rep. Cathy McMorris Rodgers and Rep. Pete Sessions for their valuable support,” said **Michelle Sie Whitten, President, CEO, and Co-Founder of the Global Down Syndrome Foundation**. “People with Down syndrome have a uniquely elevated risk for developing Alzheimer’s disease – it is estimated that 100% will have the brain pathology of Alzheimer’s by their 40s, and most will develop the associated dementia by their 60’s. Clearly, it is essential that research on both conditions should be done in tandem. Establishing new Alzheimer’s centers funded by the Department of Veterans Affairs will advance this research and, ultimately, improve the lives of millions of people with Down syndrome and millions of typical people who suffer from Alzheimer’s disease.”

“The Crnic Institute at the Anschutz Medical Campus is working to make Down syndrome funding at the NIH a priority for over 400,000 people in the US with the condition and for millions worldwide,” said **Dr. Joaquin Espinosa, Executive Director, Linda Crnic Institute for Down Syndrome**. “We have a team of great scientists, including Dr. Huntington Potter, the scientist who revealed a key mechanistic relationship between Down syndrome and Alzheimer’s disease. Research Centers of Excellence such as the ones that Rep. Mike Coffman is proposing will definitely move the field towards effective therapies or a cure for Alzheimer’s disease to benefit all society.”

H.R. 5191 will be referred to the Veterans’ Affairs Committee, of which Rep. Coffman is a Member.

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Connect with Congressman Coffman:

