In September 2025, I had the privilege of representing the Non-Commissioned Officer Association (NCOA) of Colorado Springs in partnership with the Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS) at their annual Legislative Priorities for the 119th Congress on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C. For two days, September 16–17, I joined with fellow advocates, surviving spouses, and Families to walk the halls of Congress, meeting with lawmakers to speak on behalf of those who no longer can.

Being selected for this event was both humbling and deeply meaningful. As a Master Sergeant in the U.S. Army, I know what it means to serve, and I understand the sacrifices our Soldiers quietly make behind the scenes. But walking side by side with surviving spouses who have endured the ultimate loss gave this experience a much greater weight. Their courage and willingness to share their stories reminded me that service does not end when a uniform comes off. The Families left behind are still serving in their own way—carrying the memory of their loved ones while fighting for a better future for others.

Our advocacy focused on four critical bills:

• The Support Love Lives On Act (S.410, H.R.1004), which ends the penalty for surviving spouses who remarry before age 55.

• The Caring for Survivors Act (S.611, H.R.2055), which raises Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) to align more closely with other federal survivor programs.

• The Service-Connected Suicide Compensation Act (H.R.2264), which recognizes veteran suicide as service-connected, ensuring Families are supported during unimaginable loss.

• The Health Care Fairness for Military Families Act / CHAMPVA Children's Care Protection Act (S.605, H.R.1404), which extends dependent healthcare coverage to age 26, in line with civilian protections.

Each of these bills speaks to the same truth: when a Soldier sacrifices their life, their Family should not also be forced to sacrifice financial stability, healthcare access, or their future. These measures ensure that the burden of loss is not compounded by inequity.

Walking into congressional offices, I felt a deep responsibility to speak not just as a Soldier, but as a voice for the Families of the fallen—Families who have given everything for our nation. It was inspiring to watch surviving spouses sit across from lawmakers and share their stories with a strength and dignity that left no doubt about why this work matters. Their resilience became the most powerful message of all.

For me personally, this experience reinforced why advocacy is part of our duty as Soldiers. We fight for each other on the battlefield, and we must also fight for each other in the halls of Congress. Standing with these Families reminded me that our legacy of service is measured not only by what we accomplish in uniform, but by how we honor and care for those left behind.

This was more than an event—it was a call to action. And it was one of the greatest honors of my career to walk beside Families whose love, loss, and courage will help create lasting change for generations to come.