



Chairman Charlie Dent

*Subcommittee on Military Construction and Veterans Affairs
House Committee on Appropriations*

Hearing: Veterans Affairs Electronic Health Record Oversight

November 15, 2017

Opening Statement As Prepared

We have convened this hearing with the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to discuss a very important and expensive issue that was first presented to us last week – VA’s plan to sign a contract with Cerner Corporation for an electronic health record. The record will use the same platform that DOD has purchased from Cerner for its health record.

Since this need developed after the FY18 budget was submitted and before we receive the FY19 budget, VA proposes to begin funding it through a reprogramming request. We understand that you have not completed negotiations with Cerner, so there are some total cost issues you are not able to discuss in open session, out of concern about generating bid protests. We intend to pursue those issues in a closed session that will follow this one. However, we are confident we can discuss the major elements of the contract in public.

For veteran Members of this Committee like Mr. Frelinghuysen and Mrs. Lowey, the creation of an electronic health record has become a tired refrain. They have been hearing about it since the mid-1990s. VA Secretaries have come and gone promising that their records were achieving interoperability, or that they were developing the same record as DOD, or that they had decided to have two different systems that would talk to each other. Now the pendulum has swung back to creating one record to be used by both Departments – the position this Committee has argued for from the start. The number of years and dollars that have been wasted reaching this point is extremely troubling.

Mr. Secretary, we know we can’t lay this past history at your feet. But you will forgive us for being a little skeptical that, at this late date, VA has now found the answer to its electronic health record conundrum. We know you are anxious to sign the contract with Cerner, but the Committee will need more information before it is comfortable with approving this first step down a long and expensive road.

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