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July 11, 2018

The Honorable Phil Roe
Chairman
House Committee on Veterans' Affairs
Washington D.C. 20515

The Honorable Tim Walz
Ranking Member
House Committee on Veterans' Affairs
Washington D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Roe and Ranking Member Walz:

On behalf of the over 3,000 members of the Nurses Organization of Veterans Affairs (NOVA), a professional nursing organization of VA nurses, we would like to offer our thoughts on H.R. 6066, legislation *to improve the productivity of the management of Department of Veterans Affairs health care*.

NOVA appreciates the intent of the legislation to put in place a system using relative value units (RVUs) to capture and compare the productivity and efficiency of all providers within the VHA system. By tracking these metrics, leadership would have a clearer picture of how resources are being used in each facility with the goal of providing effective and efficient high-quality health care.

The use of RVUs is not something new to VA, as they currently use them for several specialty care service staffing models with productivity being the key to evaluating access. We would caution setting up a system that relies on volume of care – which many larger health care systems use – with focus on a fee-based system.

As members of this Committee are aware, the VHA system is unlike the private sector in that its resources are appropriated and distributed across an integrated system with different populations and staffing needs.

Mandating a comprehensive staffing model utilizing a national standard RVU may not capture the depth and breadth of care and services VHA provides our nation's Veterans. We recognize and appreciate that Section I, (2) when establishing performance standards ... gives the Secretary the authority to incorporate RVUs and other productivity models and consider non-clinical duties such as training and research, as well as other factors that may impede productivity and efficiency. While critical staffing shortages and infrastructure issues are still being addressed, we ask the Committee to allow these factors to be considered.

We would also ask that consideration of any new requirement to address performance measures of providers take into account VA's "whole health" approach to care, and the complex injuries of the Veteran patients they serve. Surveys by VSOs have shown most Veterans prefer VA care to the private sector because of the time spent by the provider and his/her understanding of their specific needs. A system based on quality versus quantity must remain the model.

As nurses who provide care to our nation's Veterans, we understand that no model is perfect and that measuring performance standards, utilizing training where needed, and applying accurate metrics must be part of any health care system. We would ask the Committee to utilize such a system and its reporting mechanism thoughtfully to increase the quality of care that VA provides and give Veterans the care they have earned and deserve.

Sincerely,

Thelma Roach-Serry, BSN, RN, NE-BC
President, Nurses Organization of Veterans Affairs (NOVA)