

STATEMENT BY

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BEFORE THE

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

SUBCOMMITTEE ON TECHNOLOGY MODERNIZATION

VA ELECTRONIC HEALTH RECORD MODERNIZATION HEARING

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CANNON HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING, ROOM 334

Chairman Banks, Ranking Member Lamb, and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. I am honored to represent the Department of Defense (DoD) as the Director of the DoD/Veterans Affairs (VA) Interagency Program Office (IPO). The mission of the DoD/VA IPO is to lead and coordinate the adoption of and contribution to national health data standards to ensure health data interoperability among DoD, VA, and private sector healthcare worldwide. To give you a bit of history about the IPO, the Fiscal Year 2008 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) directed the DoD and VA to develop and implement electronic health record (EHR) systems or capabilities that allow for full interoperability of personal health care information between the DoD and the VA and directed the establishment of the IPO to guide both Departments in their efforts. In January 2009, the IPO completed its first charter, sharing its mission and functions with respect to attaining interoperable electronic health data. In March 2011, both secretaries of Defense and VA instructed the DoD and VA to develop a single, jointly integrated electronic health record.

When the Departments decided to pursue the modernization of individual systems in 2014, the DoD decided to replace its older system by purchasing a new, commercial off-the-shelf solution and the VA decided to modernize its existing Veterans Health Information Systems and Technology Architecture (VistA) health information system. In December 2013, the IPO was re-chartered to lead the efforts of the DoD and VA to implement national health data standards for interoperability and to establish, monitor, and approve clinical and technical standards for the integration of health data between both Departments and the private sector.

## INTEROPERABILITY AND DATA SHARING

The DoD and VA represent two of our nation's largest healthcare systems. Currently, the Departments share more than 1.5 million data elements daily, and more than 415,000 DoD and VA clinicians are able to view the real-time records of the more than 16 million patients who have received care from both Departments.

Providing high-quality healthcare to service members, veterans, and their families is one of the IPO's highest priorities, and health data interoperability is essential to improving the care

delivered. In April 2016 the Departments, with the IPO's help, met a requirement of the Fiscal Year 2014 NDAA, certifying to Congress that their systems are interoperable with an integrated display of data. While the Departments met the required objectives, interoperability is a spectrum wherein data sharing and functionality can continually improve.

The two Departments currently share health records through the Defense Medical Information Exchange (DMIX) program, which includes the Joint Legacy Viewer, a health information portal that aggregates data from across multiple data sources to provide read access to medical information across multiple government and commercial data sources. As a result, the Departments increased patient data accessed through Joint Legacy Viewer more than fivefold; including the over 1.5 million data elements shared daily between the DoD and VA combined.

#### COLLABORATIVE DATA STANDARDS

Today, working closely with the Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology (ONC) and standards development organizations, the IPO supports the identification, implementation, and evolution of the national standards associated with both Departments' Electronic Health Records. These activities are vital to continue providing the building blocks necessary for the Departments to expand and improve their health data interoperability, both across the Departments and with private healthcare providers.

The IPO is a collaborative entity, comprised of approximately 30 staff members from both the DoD and VA who have technical expertise in health data standards and information sharing. Assisting the Departments with their interoperability and Electronic Health Record modernization milestones, the IPO serves as a central resource for the DoD and VA as they develop, adopt, and update a technical framework that is clinically driven to align identified standards with approved use cases. To that end, the IPO monitors industry best practices and provides technical guidance to facilitate health data exchange between the Departments and with private healthcare providers. The IPO also serves as a conduit for the Departments' engagement with the Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology and standards development organizations to facilitate knowledge sharing on a national level. The IPO is

integrated into the Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology's planning for a national health IT ecosystem and is a key contributor to the Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology's Interoperability Standards Advisory, a process that identifies standards to advance nationwide Health IT interoperability.

## METRICS MONITORING

The IPO also plays an important role in monitoring DoD and VA interoperability efforts. Specifically, the IPO established a Health Data Interoperability Metrics Dashboard to identify Department-specific targets for transactional metrics and trends, routinely shared with Congress.

In addition to these efforts, and in conjunction with the Departments, the IPO implemented the Government Accountability Office's (GAO) recommendations that the DoD and VA adopt outcome-oriented metrics to provide a basis for assessing and reporting on the health data interoperability progress, which resulted in the DoD/VA IPO Health Outcome-Oriented Metrics Roadmap. The IPO continues to foster the development of metrics in collaboration with the Health Executive Committee's Health Data Sharing Business Line sub-workgroups, based on the Joint Interoperability Strategic Plan use cases, developing metrics for Separating Service Members and Integrated Disability Evaluation System, Patient Empowerment, Transitions of Care, and Population Health.

## ELECTRONIC HEALTH RECORD COLLABORATION

In July 2015, the DoD awarded a contract to the Leidos Inc. to deliver a modern, secure, and connected Electronic Health Record. The Leidos Partnership for Defense Health team consists of four core partners, Leidos Inc., as the prime integrator, and three primary partners in Cerner Corporation, Accenture, and Henry Schein Inc. The commercial electronic health record system, MHS GENESIS, provides a state of the market commercial off the shelf solution.

Throughout 2017, the DoD achieved major milestones, deploying MHS GENESIS to Fairchild Air Force Base, Naval Health Clinic Oak Harbor, Naval Hospital Bremerton, and Madigan Army

Medical Center, all in the state of Washington. The DoD plans to deploy MHS GENESIS to more than 9.4 million beneficiaries and 205,000 medical personnel and staff by the end of 2023.

In June 2017, VA announced its plans to adopt the same Electronic Health Record system as the DoD, and on May 17, 2018, VA signed a contract with Cerner Corporation. Both Departments using the same electronic health record system will ultimately result in a single software baseline and enable seamless care between them without the exchange and reconciliation of data between two separate systems. This decision will, over time, solve the problem of moving patient health record data between the Departments, as there will be a single, common clinical system. This decision is another step toward advancing Electronic Health Record adoption across the nation and is in the best interest of our service members, veterans, and their families.

The VA and DoD are committed to partnering in this effort and understand that the mutual success of this venture is dependent on the close coordination and communication between the two Departments. As a result, the IPO's role in facilitating collaboration between the DoD and VA is more vital than ever before. The IPO has been actively supporting the Departments with the development of a governance process to enable them to make joint decisions regarding common aspects of the Electronic Health Record solution. This process will involve multiple layers, from Department-level governance within the DoD and VA, to the interagency coordination and collaboration through working groups and committees that is already underway and facilitated by the IPO, to joint DoD/VA Electronic Health Record Modernization governance bodies. We expect these governance bodies to be in place by 2019.

The joint Electronic Health Record Modernization governance bodies will focus on adjudicating only those issues that cannot be agreed upon through the existing interagency structures. The IPO will support the governance process, host meetings, manage information collection, and communicate assessments, meeting materials, action items, and decisions. The IPO will provide expertise and guidance implementing best practices and ensure a common standard operating procedure for capturing the artifacts needed to support decision-making by the Electronic Health Record Modernization governance bodies. The IPO will also be responsible for managing,

organizing, and communicating decisions made by the governance bodies. However, the IPO will not redefine Departmental processes or function as a decision authority.

## CONCLUSION

The field of health data is constantly evolving. With the DoD and VA further enhancing interoperability through the implementation of the same Electronic Health Record, the IPO must continue collaboration with the Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology and industry partners to ensure that the DoD and VA map their data to the latest national standards, and that the Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology and the private sector can continue to learn from our experience.

The IPO is fully committed to assisting the DoD and VA as they continue their modernization. Enabling health information exchange between systems in DoD, VA, and the private sector will serve as the foundation for a patient-centric healthcare experience, seamless care transitions, and improved care for our service members, veterans, and their families.

Again, thank you for this opportunity, and I look forward to your questions.