

**The Honorable Lloyd Smucker**  
**Member of Congress**  
**11<sup>th</sup> Congressional District of Pennsylvania**

Members' Day Hearing  
House Committee on Veterans' Affairs  
September 10, 2019

Chairman Takano, Ranking Member Roe, and Members of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today.

First let me thank you for your hard work and dedication to improving the lives of our veterans and their families. Our service men and women have endured tremendous hardships and made significant sacrifices in their fight to preserve the freedom that we all enjoy today. Thanks to their courageous service, our veterans have earned and deserve the highest quality care we can provide.

Which brings me to why I've come before you today. Earlier this spring I reintroduced the VA Billing Accountability Act and today I would like to urge consideration of this bipartisan legislation.

My bill is fairly straight forward. It provides certainty in the way the VA bills our veterans by requiring the VA to deliver a bill for payment no later than 180 days after they received care at a VA facility. Non-VA facilities must also increase their coordination with the Department to ensure that co-payment bills are delivered no later than 18 months after a veteran receives care from an outside provider. Importantly, this bipartisan legislation also increases transparency for veterans by requiring the VA to notify veterans on how they can receive a waiver or establish a payment plan before the VA can collect any delayed co-payment.

Why is this necessary? The Veterans Affairs Office of Inspector General reported that in Fiscal Year 2015, of roughly 15.4 million bills the Veterans Health Administration issued during 2015, approximately 1.7 million of those were improper bills for the treatment of service-connected conditions. In some cases, veterans received bills a full five years following their care. To help put this into perspective, the Veterans Health Administration collected a staggering \$13.9 million from our nation's veterans inappropriately.

This is simply unacceptable.

We should make it easier, not harder, for our retired service men and women to transition to post-military life by not saddling them with bills for VA services from

years past. Many veterans live on fixed incomes and do not have the resources to cover unexpected costs caused by the mistakes of VA bureaucrats. my legislation provides commonsense reforms to the VA by setting forth specific and immediate billing requirements so veterans receive timely VA bills that they can count on.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify before the committee today, and for all the work that the members of this committee do to ensure quality and affordable care for our nation's veterans.

I yield back.