

Chairman Takano, Ranking Member Bost,

It is my pleasure to testify on behalf of the nearly three-quarters of million veterans who call the Commonwealth of Virginia home. Over 8.5% of Virginia's population has served in the military; this places Virginia in the top five. 20% of Virginia's economy is in the defense industry, and the defense industry maintains a writ-large commitment to employing veterans. Our veterans are part of what makes Virginia remarkable, and I'm sure my colleagues from other delegations can say the same of their respective states.

Federally, we do much to ensure the well-being of these twenty million, but there is always room for improvement. 55% of our veterans are over the age of 60. We must get Veterans Affairs right, because these 55% need us the most. I would like to take a few moments to highlight legislation I have introduced to this effect:

**H.R. 182: The Veteran's Choice and Accountability Act** aims to improve health care within the DVA by requiring the Sec. of VA to evaluate the hospital care, medical services, and nursing home care. The Sec. of VA shall submit to Congress an evaluation of implementation of the VA Budget and Choice Improvement Act.

I know how tirelessly the Department of Veterans Affairs works, but I also recognize that there are gaps in coverage. While **H.R. 182** looks for a top-down audit of effectiveness, **H.R. 183** presents an opportunity for grassroots change. **H.R. 183: The Veterans Collaboration Act** creates a 2-year pilot program on collaboration with nonprofits such as veterans service organizations and educational institutions that provide pro-bono legal advice. These organizations have ground intel on real needs of veterans that may not be readily apparent to those who have not served this nation in one of the service branches. It is imperative we open all avenues for collaboration.

Finally, **H.R. 185: Veterans Affairs Transfer of Information and Sharing of Disability Examination Procedures with DOD Doctors Act** obligates care providers to be referred separating servicemember to a health care provider certified by the Department of Veterans Affairs if they have a condition that would make them eligible for disability and establishes shared medical records

system between VA and DoD Health. Every single person in this hearing has a constituent who has slipped through the cracks with respect to disability eligibility. **H.R. 185** will shore up this institution.

I would like to end with my appreciation for the sheer size and scope of the Veteran's Affairs mission. There are many things the Department of Veteran's Affairs does and does well. This commitment to excellence gives us the bandwidth to improve, which I hope we can do during this 117<sup>th</sup> Congress.