

RANKING MEMBER

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Development and Related Agencies

Subcommittee on Defense

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MARCY KAPTUR

9TH DISTRICT, OHIO

December 4, 2025

The Honorable Mike Bost
Chairman
House Committee on Veterans' Affairs
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mark Takano
Ranking Member
House Committee on Veterans' Affairs
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Bost and Ranking Member Takano,

I am writing to seek your guidance, and specifically request your attention, to improving health services to veterans in the entire Northwestern quadrant of Ohio. **I am requesting you review the current outdated VA affiliation Northwest Ohio maintains with the University of Michigan** – a relationship established in 1948, well before the state of Ohio established a medical university at Toledo in 1964.

It is long overdue for the VA to update its relationships in this part of our country. Respectfully, I ask that you adapt the VA's operational structure to recognize and bolster the academic affiliation with the State of Ohio's Medical University at Toledo.

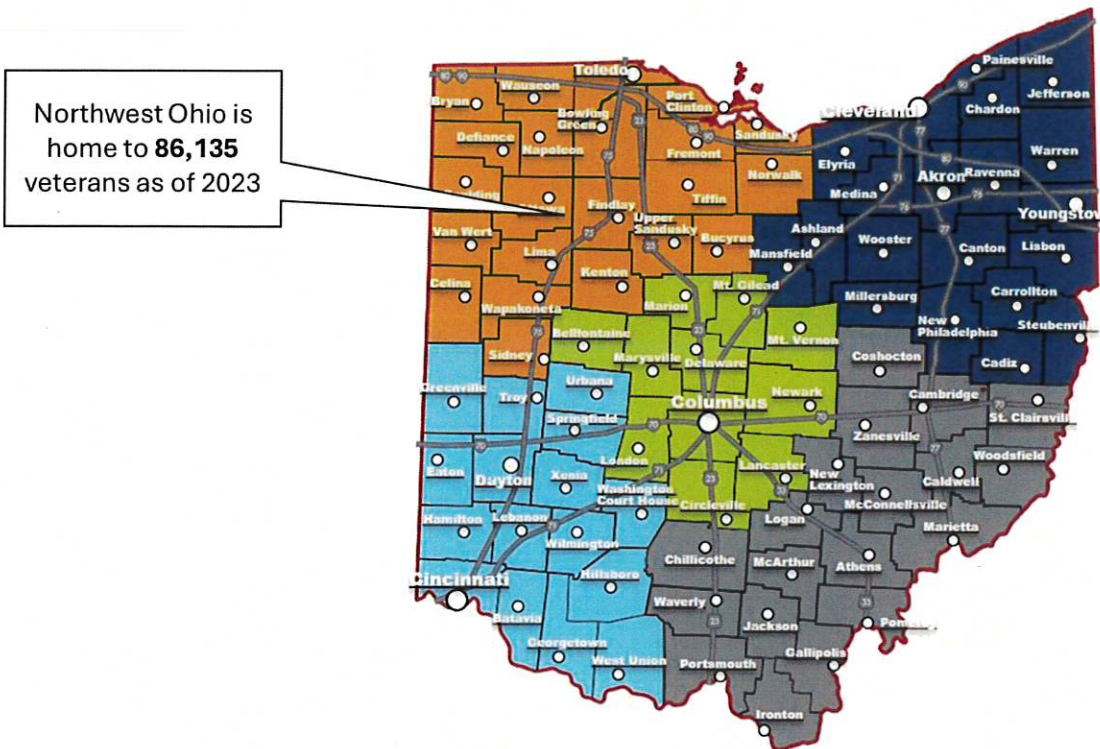
Ohio's Veterans Population Density:

As of 2023, the total number of veterans residing in Ohio's Northwest quadrant was 86,135. Indeed, this number is well over double the number in the Washtenaw County/Ann Arbor area. When one includes veterans in all Northwest Ohio and those who reside in Michigan along the border with Ohio who use Toledo's VA clinic, it is very apparent that an enhanced VA relationship at UPMC makes sense, offering advantages to veterans and the VA itself.

The Ann Arbor VA campus has become quite large and daunting for Ohio veterans, requiring bus travel both ways and all-day waits. This request will provide respectful and very welcome convenience for veterans while enhancing the VA's current, limited academic affiliation it maintains with the University of Toledo. Essentially, the relationship will transform from stepchild status to a full affiliation with the VA. This will result in an achievable, cost-effective step to improve patient healthcare for underserved veterans across our region. It will allow for dual appointments, residencies and research to increase.

In addition, the University of Toledo maintains a nationally accredited and highly acclaimed Pharmacy School – one of the only wholly public institutions in the entire northern third of Ohio. This, along with adjacent Red Cross Blood center serving our 100 hospitals and clinics, offers great potential for collaboration with the VA as well.

After 60 years of the existence of a State Medical University at Toledo, it is time to make this long overdue adjustment. **Our Ohio region seeks direct academic affiliation with the VA via the VA Community-Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC) located directly on the University of Toledo's Medical College campus.** I invite you to visit at your earliest convenience. Our veterans are asking for it and searching for a way to access the care they earned through their service to this country amid practical and logistical hurdles. This will result in better patient care, finally overcome annoying logistical hurdles, and heal the awkward, truncated medical relationship with the VA.



VAMC Distribution:

Ohio has five VA medical centers (VAMCs)—but **four of the five are in southern and central Ohio.** The only VAMC in Northern Ohio is in Cleveland. This is patently unfair to our Northwest Ohio veterans. We have a high demand signal among our veteran population to warrant the priorities I am requesting you review. This demand signal increases further if one includes the 17,395 veterans that live in Michigan counties bordering Ohio (Monroe, Lenawee, and Hillsdale) who would also benefit from a primary relationship with UT.

Population and Median Income:

Despite Ohio having a veteran population over 25 percent larger than the state of Michigan, Northwest Ohio has been particularly shortchanged by the VA.

Ohio ranks number six in total veteran population, while Michigan ranks number 11. My home county, Lucas County, has double the number of veterans as Washtenaw County, Michigan, where the Ann Arbor VAMC is located.

Further, our catchment area remains one of the lowest median income regions in our nation – in the bottom quarter of Congressional districts. Ann Arbor’s location places that VAMC in one of the wealthier districts, within the top 25 percent of our nation.

Table 1. Ohio/Michigan Population Comparison

| Total Population 2023 | | Veteran Population 2023 | |
|-----------------------|------------|-------------------------|---------|
| OH Total Population | 11,785,935 | OH Veteran Population | 681,092 |
| MI Total Population | 10,037,261 | MI Veteran Population | 516,573 |

The difference is even more stark when considering metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs). The United States Office of Management and Budget delineates MSAs using published standards applied to Census Bureau data. In general, an MSA is a core area together with adjacent communities that have a high degree of economic and social integration with that core. **The veteran population within Toledo’s MSA is MORE THAN DOUBLE that of Ann Arbor’s MSA.**

Table 2. Toledo vs Ann Arbor Metropolitan Statistical Area

| Toledo Metropolitan Area Veteran Population 2023 | | Ann Arbor Metropolitan Area Veteran Population 2023 | |
|--|---------------|---|---------------|
| County | Veterans | County | Veterans |
| Fulton | 2,217 | Washtenaw | 13,450 |
| Lucas | 23,216 | Total | 13,450 |
| Wood | 6,911 | | |
| Total | 32,344 | | |

VA Relationships:

The VA has yet to fully capitalize on our medical university assets and the opportunities it presents to improve healthcare access for veterans in and around Northwest Ohio. To date, to deal with increasing veteran demand, the VA approach in our region appears to be to open small, understaffed clinics in two or three small towns that still report to Ann Arbor. But these are located even further from Ann Arbor than those who travel from the Toledo area. It would make much more sense for the VA to look at the Northwest quadrant of Ohio as a whole and how the entire region could be better served with an enhanced medical affiliation with the State University of Toledo Medical Center.

Our region’s primary VA affiliation was established in 1948 with the VAMC in Ann Arbor, Michigan. At that time, our region did not yet have a state medical university. It does now along with many offerings, including pharmacy, nursing, urology, oncology, dialysis, and physician assistant programs. **In a very medically underserved region of our state, the current arrangement and lack of a more robust and active academic affiliation seriously inhibits our region’s ability to access veterans as well as attendant VA research funds.** The VA is not able to fully engage programs like joint residencies.

Taking a Toll on Veterans:

The VAMC at Ann Arbor is located over one hour away. **Thousands of hours and dollars are wasted annually with travel time to Ann Arbor.** This travel time does not include consideration for the wear and tear on veterans (e.g. cancer patients throwing up on buses after chemotherapy), frequent parking challenges, access delays, and long wait times to return home after difficult treatments.

Our Ohio region holds an “out-of-state” relationship with Michigan established after World War II. For over half a century, this has caused veterans from our region, which ranks in the bottom quarter of median income for our nation, to travel to Ann Arbor, Michigan for services. It is time to bring treatment for our region’s veterans closer to home.

Toledo’s Appeal:

Fortunately, 25 years ago, I was successful in achieving step one for an enhanced relationship with the VA – construction of our CBOC on the University of Toledo Medical College campus. My goals here have not changed since then.

Veterans from six counties now utilize the Toledo CBOC as their primary facility, with 32,983 outpatient encounters for primary care, 16,282 encounters for mental health, and 35,287 encounters for specialty care in 2018 alone. From FY13 to FY18 the **Toledo CBOC experienced a 13 percent increase in core unique patients.** Despite over 60 years of the University of Toledo and its state teaching hospital providing medical education and care, there’s only a **diminished VA primary affiliation with our state University of Toledo Medical School.**

An enhanced affiliation focused on the benefits that could accrue to veterans in the local communities in Toledo and Northwest Ohio, would bring with it opportunities beyond medical staff training. For example, this could include joint use of the University of Toledo’s Medical Center bus that travels to remote, underserved communities across our region. This is a ready-made opportunity for the VA to expand its partnership with the University of Toledo for shared use of this mobile resource to include access and services to veterans who often reside in remote locations across our region.

Hiring Practices:

These benefits extend further when considering employment practices. Currently it is common for the VA to hire practitioners who live in Ann Arbor to work at the Toledo CBOC. This poses two costs. Ann Arbor is classified as a “discrete area” that alters the level of pay for GS employees. Employees that live in Ann Arbor receive an additional Locality Pay Adjustment of 28.82% to compensate for their higher cost of living. **This means that hiring from outside the Toledo area costs the VA more than hiring within Toledo.** It also imposes costs – driving time, gas costs, etc. – on the employees themselves.

The less tangible pitfall of this hiring practice is perhaps the most important. **VA employees that do not live where they work do not interact with the community they serve as part of their daily lives.** Hiring employees from Ann Arbor leaves the VA with a deficit of “boots on the ground” to maintain awareness of the evolving needs and requirements of the veteran community

they serve. This can be remedied by an enhanced academic affiliation that leverages practitioners who live and work in Toledo.

Bolstering VA's Academic Affiliation with UTM:

The VAMC's primary affiliation in proximity to the University of Michigan is exemplary of ways by which Northwest Ohio could play more than a secondary role within its own veterans' health system. It is long overdue for the VAMC in Ann Arbor, through the Toledo CBOC, to be fully engaged in leveraging the dual appointments and credentialing capacity that the University of Toledo could provide to our veterans' community.

I believe it is even more critical to expand capability in Toledo when one considers the likely seepage from veterans in surrounding counties that do not formally fall under the ME Southeast 10-i-3 submarket and nonetheless use the Toledo CBOC to address their healthcare needs. To fully develop this picture, **I am requesting data from the VA regarding how many individual patients in Michigan make appointments at the Toledo CBOC, along with how many patients residing in Ohio yet outside the ME Southeast 10-i-3 submarket utilize our clinic.**

I appreciate your attention and that of the Committee to this request and look forward to the opportunity for me to discuss them as soon as possible. Thank you for your work serving those who have served our nation and borne the battle. My hope is veterans who live in our region of Northwest Ohio will benefit soon from your intervention and serious consideration of my requests. Thank you very much.

Sincerely,



Marcy Kaptur
Member of Congress
Ohio's 9th Congressional District