

**OPENING STATEMENT OF NELSON SOOHOO, M.D.
ASSOCIATE DEAN FOR GRADUATE MEDICAL EDUCATION, UCLA SCHOOL OF
MEDICINE
MAY 13, 2026 HEARING BEFORE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

Good morning, Chairman Bost, Ranking Member Takano, and members of the Committee. It's a privilege to be here today.

My name is Nelson SooHoo. I am the Associate Dean for Graduate Medical Education at UCLA's School of Medicine, responsible for resident physicians, and I have also proudly served as an orthopedic surgeon at the West Los Angeles VA for the last 20 years.

Taking care of our Veterans is a very personal mission to me, and a vital service to our community. My father, Jack SooHoo, served in the Air Force during the Korean War. His service left me and my family with a lasting appreciation for the sacrifices all Veterans and their families make for our country. Through my own work, I have witnessed firsthand how UCLA's partnership with the VA strengthens Veterans' care while advancing the mission of both of our institutions. I strive to instill in every resident we train the debt we owe to our Veterans.

UCLA resident physicians serve on the VA health care team in 57 medical specialties. In addition, three-quarters of our medical students train and serve Veterans at VA facilities. UCLA resident physicians and faculty are involved in

every surgery, all inpatient care, and the vast majority of outpatient care at the West LA VA Medical Center. This includes approximately 3,000 surgeries every year, and more than 1 million patient visits each year for over 80,000 Veterans. We have also developed critical programs to address Veterans' most pressing needs. I have seen firsthand how Veterans struggle to navigate care in the community, and we train our physicians to understand the social and psychological challenges they face every day. This includes PTSD treatment and research, as well as psychiatric care and advancing substance abuse treatment. Our commitment is reflected in our creation of a specific VA-based track in our Psychiatry residency program. Each year we match eight residents specifically to this track based on their dedication to the mission of serving Veterans.

While the core of our work at West LA VA is our medical mission, we also have a lease of the land where UCLA's Jackie Robinson baseball stadium is located. That lease was authorized by Congress in 2016, and the VA's Office of Inspector General has concluded on multiple occasions that the lease is fully compliant with the law.

Under that lease, UCLA has agreed to provide rent payments and \$13.5 million of in-kind contributions to Veterans' programs over a 10-year period. This is above and beyond the medical care that we render at the West LA VA Medical Center. UCLA has already exceeded those obligations by over \$2 million. This

includes over \$4 million for the Veterans' Legal Clinic, where in the last 6 years UCLA law students and Clinic staff have helped Veterans secure an additional \$24 million in lifetime benefits. It also includes over \$4.5 million for the Veteran Family Wellbeing Center, which provides wellbeing and resilience training services for Veterans and their families. Since opening in 2017, the Center has welcomed nearly 40,000 attendees at education and community building events, and has completed around 10,000 resilience training sessions for over 1,300 participants. These are just two of the many programs and services that UCLA delivers under the lease at no additional cost to the VA or Veterans.

Our 70-year partnership with the VA and commitment to Veteran service also extends beyond our work at West LA VA. A key example is Operation Mend, a program UCLA helped pioneer alongside the United States military. As part of that program, we provide free advanced surgical and medical treatment, comprehensive psychological evaluation and support, and intensive treatment programs for post-9/11 Veterans with PTSD and traumatic brain injury. Operation Mend, which is part of the Wounded Warrior Project's Warrior Care Network, is the only program of its kind in the nation, and it has been one of the greatest privileges of my career to help restore function to these Veterans using the most advanced surgical techniques.

We recognize that there are questions regarding the long-term future of UCLA's lease at the West LA VA. UCLA is committed to working in good faith with our partners at the VA toward a mutually agreeable solution. Whatever the outcome of those future discussions, UCLA will continue to proudly serve Veterans at the West LA VA Medical Center and beyond.

For decades, UCLA and the VA have worked together to train the next generation of physicians, advance medical research, and most importantly deliver the highest quality of care to those heroes who sacrificed for our country. I hope my own role in this long relationship honors both my father and every Veteran we serve.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today. I welcome the Committee's questions.