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**STATEMENT OF  
GWENDOLYN WORTHY  
NATIONAL COMMANDER VETERANS SERVICE OFFICER  
FOR THE RECORD OF THE  
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS  
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
MAY 11, 2026**

Chairman Bost, Ranking Member Takano and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for inviting the NABVETS (National Association for Black Veterans) to submit testimony for the record of this legislative hearing. As you know, NABVETS is a congressionally chartered and Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) accredited veterans service organization. We provide meaningful claims support free of charge to more than 1 million veterans and family members, caregivers and survivors. We are pleased to provide our views on the bills under consideration by the Committee.

**NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR BLACK VETERANS, INC. (NABVETS)  
NATIONAL POSITION STATEMENT**

**Subject:** Protecting Earned Benefits, Strengthening VA Capacity, and Advancing Whole-Veteran Support

**Date:** February 24, 2026

**Prepared by:** NABVETS National Legislative & Policy Team (Draft)

**For Approval by:** National Commander and National Command Council (NCC)

**Purpose**

This Position Statement affirms NABVETS' official position on current federal actions and legislative priorities affecting veterans earned benefits, VA healthcare capacity, transition support, survivor protections, and evidence-based innovation in treatment options.

**Background**

Recent federal actions and congressional oversight have underscored urgent risks and opportunities within the veteran ecosystem, including:

- Proposed administrative policies that could reduce compensation for veterans whose service-connected conditions are managed by medication.
- VA staffing shortages and infrastructure challenges are impacting timely access to care.
- Ongoing concerns about uneven quality, training, and interoperability in VA Community Care networks.
- Persistent gaps in transition support (TAP), employment pathways, and nontraditional education options.

- The need to modernize and strengthen survivor benefits and improve timeliness for DIC claims.
- Growing attention to research-based alternative therapies for PTSD, depression, substance use disorder, and suicide prevention.

### **NABVETS Core Principles**

NABVETS evaluates veteran policy through these core commitments:

1. **Veterans' benefits are earned** and must not be reduced by administrative maneuvers.
2. **Access and equity matter:** outcomes must improve for Black veterans and underserved communities across every zip code.
3. **VA must remain strong:** modernization must not become an excuse for hollowing out the VA system.
4. **Transparency is non-negotiable:** major VA actions must include stakeholder input and measurable accountability.
5. **Protect veterans from predatory practices** while preserving legitimate pathways to benefits assistance and representation.

### **NABVETS Position**

NABVETS supports **reforms that modernize and strengthen** the Department of Veterans Affairs while opposing any effort—direct or indirect—to reduce earned benefits, weaken VA's internal capacity, or shift care into fragmented systems without enforceable standards and oversight.

### **Policy Requests / What NABVETS could support**

#### **A. Protect Earned Benefits and Compensation**

1. NABVETS supports the **formal rescission** of any VA rule or policy that reduces disability compensation based on symptom improvement through medication.
2. NABVETS supports legislative and administrative safeguards ensuring **no veteran is penalized for adhering to prescribed treatment** for service-connected conditions.
3. NABVETS supports timely, accurate, veteran-centered **claims and appeals modernization**, including clear communication and accountability for delays.

#### **B. Strengthen VA Healthcare Capacity**

1. NABVETS supports immediate action to **restore and stabilize VA staffing**, including clinical, mental health, claims processing, and support roles essential to patient care.
2. NABVETS supports sustained investment to address **aging VA infrastructure**, including modernization of facilities and clinics serving urban, rural, and remote veteran populations.
3. NABVETS supports policies that reduce wait times while preserving high-quality VA specialty care for combat trauma, TBI, MST, toxic exposure, and complex chronic conditions.

#### **C. Community Care Standards and Interoperability**

1. NABVETS supports **Community Care only when it is fully integrated**, including enforceable medical record interoperability and continuity of care.

2. NABVETS supports requiring Community Care providers and third-party administrators to meet **training and competency standards comparable to VA**, including military cultural competency, suicide prevention, toxic exposure, TBI, women veterans' care, and trauma-informed practices.
3. NABVETS supports improved oversight, reporting, and accountability of Community Care networks to prevent gaps, bias, or denial of appropriate care.

#### **D. Transition, TAP, and Meaningful Employment**

1. NABVETS supports strengthening TAP with robust financial literacy components (debt management, taxes, investing) and improved "warm handover" coordination between DoD, VA, and DOL.
2. NABVETS supports allowing service members to attend TAP multiple times and encouraging spousal/family participation.
3. NABVETS supports expanded access to **apprenticeships, on-the-job training, and Veteran Readiness & Employment (VR&E)** pathways that lead to living-wage careers.

#### **E. Survivors, DIC, and Family Support**

1. NABVETS supports modernization and strengthening of survivor benefits, including reforms advanced through proposals such as the **Love Lives On Act** and **Caring for Survivors Act**.
2. NABVETS supports reducing DIC delays and improving transparency, communication, and staffing to ensure survivors receive timely decisions.
3. NABVETS supports suicide prevention resources that recognize the unique burden on spouses, caregivers, and family members.

#### **F. Research, Innovation, and Evidence-Based Alternative Therapies**

1. NABVETS supports expanded federally funded research into evidence-based alternative therapies (including but not limited to emerging treatments under clinical supervision) for PTSD, depression, and suicide prevention.
2. NABVETS supports accelerated interagency coordination among VA, DoD, HHS, and FDA to reduce unnecessary barriers to responsible research and access pathways.
3. NABVETS supports veteran-centered education and safeguards to ensure safety, quality, and informed consent.

#### **Impact on Black Veterans & Underserved Communities**

NABVETS emphasizes that policy changes must be assessed through an equity lens. Black veterans and underserved communities face disproportionate barriers due to gaps in geographic access, provider shortages, cultural competency issues, and inconsistent Community Care experiences. Policies should aim to improve—not worsen—trust, outcomes, and access.

#### **Actions NABVETS Will Take**

- Engage congressional leadership, the House and Senate Veterans Affairs Committees, and the VA for prompt corrective action on policies that threaten earned benefits.
- Mobilize NABVETS chapters to educate veterans and survivors on their rights and available resources.
- Coordinate with partner VSOs and coalitions to strengthen oversight, push for accountable reform, and support the full veteran ecosystem.
- Submit formal comments and testimony when regulatory actions warrant public record response

NABVETS will continue to coordinate with NABVETS National leadership and Maryland coalition partners to advance veteran-centered solutions and protect earned benefits

