

**STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD
OF
PARALYZED VETERANS OF AMERICA
PROVIDED TO THE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON HEALTH
CONCERNING PROPOSED LEGISLATION**

July 9, 2013

Chairman Benishek, Ranking Member Brownley, and members of the Subcommittee, Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA) thanks you for the opportunity to submit a statement for the record regarding the five pieces of proposed legislation being considered today. PVA appreciates that you are addressing these important issues involving the health of our nation's veterans.

The “Long-Term Care Veterans Choice Act”

PVA generally supports the “Long-Term Care Veterans Choice Act.” This bill proposes to amend title 38, United States Code to authorize the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to enter into contracts or agreements for the transfer of veterans to non-VA adult foster homes for certain veterans who are unable to live independently. PVA believes that VA’s primary obligation involving long-term support services is to provide veterans with quality medical care in a healthy and safe environment.

As it relates to veterans with a catastrophic injury or disability, it is PVA’s position that adult foster homes are only appropriate for disabled veterans who do not require regular monitoring by licensed providers, but rather have a catastrophic injury or disability and are able to sustain a high level of independence. When these veterans are transferred to adult foster homes, care coordination with VA specialized systems of care is vital to the veterans’ overall health and well-being. The drafted text of this bill requires the veteran to receive VA home health services as a condition to be transferred. As such, PVA believes that if a veteran with a spinal cord injury or disorder is eligible and willing to be transferred to an adult foster home, the VA must have an established system in place that requires the VA home based primary care team to coordinate care with the VA SCI/D Center and the SCI/D primary care team that is within the closest proximity to the adult foster home. When caring for a veteran with a catastrophic injury or disability this specialized expertise is extremely important to prevent and treat associated illnesses that can quickly manifest and jeopardize the health of the veteran.

When catastrophically injured or disabled veterans who receive services from one of the VA's specialized systems of care are placed in a non-VA adult foster home they must be regularly evaluated by specialized providers who are trained to meet the needs of their specific conditions. PVA also believes that as this draft legislation is aptly titled the, "Long Term Care Veterans Choice Act," veterans should only be transferred from a VA facility to a non-VA adult foster home with the full consent of the veteran, pursuant to title 38 U.S.C., Section 1710A(b)(1).

H.R. 1443, the "Tinnitus Research and Treatment Act"

PVA does not have a position on H.R. 1443, the "Tinnitus Research and Treatment Act of 2013," a bill that proposes to direct the VA to recognize tinnitus as a mandatory condition for research and treatment. PVA supports VA research efforts involving hearing loss and conditions such as tinnitus, however, we believe that the selection of research subject areas and projects should be done through the VA scientific peer review process.

H.R. 1612

PVA does not have a position on H.R. 1612, a bill to direct the VA to convey a parcel of land in Tuskegee, Alabama, to Tuskegee University.

H.R. 1702, the "Veterans Transportation Service Act"

PVA supports H.R. 1702, the "Veterans Transportation Service Act," a bill to amend title 38 United States Code to make permanent the authority of the VA to transport individuals to and from VA facilities when it is in connection with rehabilitation, counseling, examination treatment, and care. Too often lack of transportation is a barrier to veterans' access to medical

care. This is frequently the case for disabled veterans who do not have a personal means of transportation. Arranging for accessible transportation can be very arduous and time consuming, and as a result it is common for disabled veterans who are not able to drive themselves to medical appointments to delay health care until transportation can be arranged, or forgo medical attention completely. It is for this reason that PVA strongly supports H.R. 1702 and encourages Congress and VA to further improve veterans' access to care by providing accessible transportation for disabled veterans, specifically veterans who have incurred a spinal cord injury or disorder, or veterans who use a wheelchair.

H.R. 2065, the “Safe Housing for Homeless Veterans Act”

PVA does not have a position on H.R. 2065, the “Safe Housing for Homeless Veterans Act.” If enacted this legislation would amend title 38, United States Code, to require entities that provide services to homeless veterans and receive per diem payments from the VA to comply with codes relevant to operations and level of care provided to veterans. PVA supports Secretary Shinseki's goal of eradicating homelessness among America's veterans, and believes that the safety of facilities that offer services to homeless veterans is of extreme importance.

Paralyzed Veterans of America appreciates this opportunity to express our views on the proposed bills being reviewed. We look forward to working with the Subcommittee on these and other issues in the future, and are happy to answer any questions.

Information Required by Rule XI 2(g)(4) of the House of Representatives

Pursuant to Rule XI 2(g)(4) of the House of Representatives, the following information is provided regarding federal grants and contracts.

Fiscal Year 2013

No federal grants or contracts received.

Fiscal Year 2012

No federal grants or contracts received.

Fiscal Year 2011

Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims, administered by the Legal Services Corporation
— National Veterans Legal Services Program— \$262,787.