

**Wenstrup Remarks as Prepared for Delivery – House Veterans Affairs Health
Subcommittee Legislative Hearing 4/15/21**

Thank you, Chair Brownley and Ranking Member Bergman, for the opportunity to speak on my legislation to clarify a technical error affecting the Director of Podiatric Services within the Veterans Health Administration.

This legislation would create a new Podiatric Medical Director position, while eliminating the previous title of Director of Podiatric Service. This new position would still be responsible for the operation of the podiatric service and would still be appointed by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs upon the recommendation of the Under Secretary for Health.

The reason for this change is to correct an error in a recently passed law that provided waivers to allow physician medical directors to receive a pay increase. After the VA implemented the pay changes, stakeholders in the podiatry community realized the Director of Podiatric Service wasn't listed as a physician position and therefore not able to get the salary of his peers. In fact, this sets up a scenario where the podiatry director would be paid less than other medical directors, and potentially even less than some of the providers he oversees.

In the 115th Congress, when I served as chairman of this very subcommittee, I was proud to lead the VA Provider Equity Act, which eventually became Section 502 of the VA MISSION Act. This legislation placed podiatrists in the same pay schedule as physicians and dentists, and clarified that podiatrists are eligible for leadership opportunities within the VA.

This legislation we are considering today is consistent with the MISSION Act's intent of providing equity for podiatrists by correcting a technical error and placing the Podiatric Medical Director on equal footing to their physician and dentist peers. Additionally, the legislation will ensure that the VA is able to recruit a podiatrist to fill the position of Podiatric Medical Director whenever there is a vacancy.

Overall, this legislation will enhance the ability of the Veterans Health Administration to hire qualified medical leadership and further their mission of serving veterans with the highest quality care.

I would like to thank Representative Mrvan of Indiana for his work leading this legislation with me, and with that, Madam Chair, I yield back.