



June 21, 2023

The Honorable Mariannette Miller-Meeks  
Chairwoman  
House Committee on Veterans' Affairs  
Subcommittee on Health  
364 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20003

The Honorable Julia Brownley  
House Committee on Veterans' Affairs  
Subcommittee on Health  
364 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20003

Dear Chairwoman Miller-Meeks and Ranking Member Brownley:

On behalf of Argentum, the leading national association representing senior living communities and the older adults and families they serve, I appreciate your holding today's hearing on pending legislation, including H.R. 1815, the Expanding Veterans' Options for Long-Term Care Act.

The members of Argentum operate senior living communities offering assisted living, independent living, continuing care, and memory care services. Along with its state partners, Argentum's membership represents approximately 75 percent of the professionally managed communities in the senior living industry—an industry with a national economic impact of nearly a quarter of a trillion dollars and responsible for providing more than 1.6 million jobs. These communities are home to nearly two million vulnerable seniors, offering choice, dignity, security, and comfort in the final years of life.

Our veteran population is aging rapidly, and so are their long-term care needs. According to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, roughly half of the 9 million veterans currently enrolled in veterans' health care programs are 65 or older. Over the next decade, the number of veterans over 75 is expected to approach 3 million. The number of veterans aged 85 or older receiving care from VA health services is expected to grow approximately 535 percent over the next 20 years.

Federal data shows that someone turning age 65 today has a 70 percent chance of needing some type of long-term care in their lifetime. However, the Department of Veterans' Affairs predicts that approximately 80 percent of veterans will develop the need for long-term services.

Argentum, its members, and its state partner organizations strongly support H.R. 1815, a commonsense approach to expand veterans' access to assisted living services at a time that the aging population is creating growing demand by older Americans and veterans for assisted living and other long-term care options. Many veterans eligible for nursing home care may not need skilled nursing or other institutional settings and may prefer a more home-like setting that promotes independence such as assisted living when appropriate.



In her prepared remarks, Dr. Erica Scavella, Assistant Under Secretary for Health for Clinical Services at the Department of Veterans Affairs, indicated that the VA supports H.R. 1815, with some technical amendments and subject to the availability of appropriations. We welcome the VA's support of this important legislation.

In a 2021 report to Congress, the VA outlined federal savings that could be achieved if veterans were given the option of assisted living care. Approximately 5 percent of veterans residing in federally funded Community Nursing Homes (CNHs) could be appropriately housed in assisted living. In FY2020 the annual cost of a CNH placement was \$120,701 compared with \$51,600 for assisted living. By utilizing assisted living for individuals who meet the relevant criteria at the time of admission, the VA would realize a potential cost of avoidance of \$69,101 per placement per year.

Assisted living communities are home to two million seniors, of which 42% are veterans or their spouses. However, the current VA prohibition on paying for assisted living room and board fees means many low-income veterans who participate in federal assistance programs have had to pay for almost all assisted living costs out of pocket. H.R. 1815 is the first step in addressing this issue by helping VA provide access to a greater range of long-term care options, and prepare to care for the ever-increasing population of aging veterans.

Argentum and its members look forward to working with members of the Veterans Affairs Committee to pass H.R. 1815, and to identify bipartisan legislative solutions to increase veterans' access to assisted living. Please contact me with any questions or requests for additional information.

Sincerely,

James Balda  
President & CEO  
Argentum