



**UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA**  
**OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT**

March 11, 2025

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

Dear Members of the Subcommittee on Health:

On behalf of the University of Nebraska, I would like to extend my sincere gratitude for the opportunity to provide testimony on making permanent the CHIP-IN for Veterans Act. It is an honor to engage with the Committee on such a critical issue that has already demonstrated success in delivering high-quality healthcare facilities for our nation's veterans through innovative public-private partnerships.

As outlined in the attached materials, the University of Nebraska Medical Center (UNMC) and Nebraska Medicine have a longstanding history of collaboration with the Department of Veterans Affairs to provide exceptional care to those who have served our country. Building on the proven success of the CHIP-IN model, we believe there is an opportunity to further enhance healthcare delivery for veterans in Nebraska and Western Iowa through the construction of a new VA hospital adjacent to the forthcoming Project Health facilities on the UNMC campus.

This strategic co-location would result in significant cost savings, reduced construction timelines, and enhanced access to world-class care for our veterans. By leveraging private sector efficiencies and philanthropic support, this initiative aligns with the core principles of the CHIP-IN Act and exemplifies the power of public-private partnerships in modernizing veteran healthcare infrastructure.

We appreciate the Committee's leadership and commitment to improving healthcare for our nation's veterans. We encourage you to review the attached materials for further details on this proposal and look forward to continued discussions on how we can work together to make this vision a reality.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey P. Gold, M.D.  
President

Attachments



## UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA

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Testimony before the House Veterans' Affairs Committee  
Subcommittee on Health  
President Jeffrey P. Gold, M.D.  
University of Nebraska System  
Oral Testimony  
March 11, 2025

Good afternoon, Chairwoman Miller-Meeks, Ranking Member Brownley, Congressman Bacon, and members of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, Subcommittee on Health. I am Dr. Jeffrey Gold, and I have the distinct privilege of serving as the President of the University of Nebraska System which has campuses in Lincoln, Omaha, and Kearney, as well as a top ranked Academic Medical Center in Omaha. We educate approximately 50,000 students and do approximately \$700 M in research. I am a physician and heart surgeon by training. For 10 years prior to my current position, I had the privilege of serving as the Chancellor of the University of Nebraska Medical Center (UNMC) and the Board Chair of Nebraska Medicine, a world-class, statewide medical care and research campus approximately one mile from the current VA facilities. For many decades, UNMC has had broad and deep relationships with civilian and military federal departments, focused on training, research and clinical care. Over the past decade, there has been intense multi departmental focus and key federal partnerships in the CBRNE global health security sector.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of Congressman Bacon's H.R. 217, co-sponsored by Congressmen Gottheimer and Wittman, which seeks to make permanent the *CHIP-IN for Veterans Act*. This bill supports our service members through innovative approaches to develop and finance VA facilities through public-private partnerships.

In 2016, a former colleague of yours, Congressman Brad Ashford of Nebraska, was instrumental in passing new legislation creating a pilot program that would allow for public-private partnerships with the VA. This opportunity led to a remarkable improvement in care for our local veterans' community, including construction of a new ambulatory center that today serves as the key resource for outpatient diagnostic, procedural and interventional veterans care services in local the Nebraska-Western Iowa region. This project, funded through a combination of federal dollars and private philanthropy, has been recognized nationally as a true pillar of success.



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Over the past years, the University of Nebraska Medical Center identified a significant need to replace several of our own aging academic medical center facilities on the Omaha campus. Among these improvements is a forthcoming \$2.19 billion project, known as “Project Health,” that will serve as a state-of-the-art medical facility, with unique training opportunities focused on meeting Nebraska’s growing need for medical professionals. This project will also provide access to high-quality advanced medical care, a unique interprofessional multidisciplinary learning environment and access to life saving clinical trials for patients across the state. Project Health is a collaboration with the state of Nebraska, the city of Omaha, the University of Nebraska, the academic Medical Center, and Nebraska’s philanthropic community.

UNMC’s history of successful partnership with the VA, combined with the forthcoming construction of Project Health facilities, present a unique opportunity for further collaboration to better serve our nation’s veterans and a model for the future.

We have proposed that a new VA hospital, positioned on the UNMC campus to better meet the needs of veterans in Nebraska and Western Iowa, would be constructed to replace the aging structure currently in use. This new free-standing facility would be branded, staffed and operated by the VA with physical connectivity to Project Health for potentially shared diagnostic, interventional, laboratory and support services. This would also provide proximity for university clinicians and learners from UNMC, while remaining open to staffing and training of other private academic medical center professional staff.

This state-of-the-art facility, leveraging private construction and adjacent resources, would be significantly more cost-effective than renovating or replacing the existing VA hospital that was opened in 1950. In this scenario, both the new medical facility and adjacent academic, research, and clinical facilities, could potentially share state-of-the-art diagnostic and procedural equipment suites and leverage future generations of healthcare professionals and other strengths of the university.

This approach is not only cost-effective, but also ensures veterans receive the highest standard of care. By utilizing private sector efficiencies and philanthropic support, we can significantly reduce construction timelines and costs, ensuring timely delivery of quality services to those who have served our country.



## UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA

### OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

The permanent authorization of the CHIP-IN Act through H.R. 217 is essential to expanding these successful partnerships nationwide. Additionally, expanding CHIP-IN to allow minor construction projects and leased facilities could further enhance VA service delivery and flexibility in meeting veterans' needs.

Our community has demonstrated the potential of highly successful public-private partnerships in veteran healthcare, and the CHIP-IN Act, born in your committee, is one example of a proven success. By making this program permanent, we can empower other communities to replicate our achievements, providing long-overdue facility upgrades and improved access to care for veterans across the country. By effecting the proposed partnership in Omaha, we together can set the standard for the future of care for those who wore the cloth of our nation and protected our freedom.

Thank you for your time, and I look forward to your questions.

Enclosures: Background and Project Narrative, President Gold Bio, Ten (10) Photos

## UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA

# BACKGROUND & PROJECT NARRATIVE

The University of Nebraska System, founded in 1869, is the public land-grant system of the State of Nebraska and has served as such as the only public university system for the past 155 years. Serving just under 50,000 undergraduate, graduate and professional learners, with over 16,000 faculty and staff on a wide spectrum of rural and urban campuses, we continue to grow in size, quality and international



Varner Hall

reputation. In addition, we have the honor of housing a DOD University Affiliated Research Center (UARC), a USAF CSTARS training center, and the largest HHS/ASPR quarantine, isolation and biocontainment facility in the United States.

In 1859, the same year as the founding of the university, Nebraska's only state Medical College was chartered in Omaha. It rapidly grew, and faculty and staff developed relationships with a wide spectrum of public and private

hospitals, clinics and physician groups—including the VA—to better serve the community and educate the next generation of healthcare professionals. In 1968, the state Medical College formally became the University of Nebraska Medical Center (UNMC), which today contains seven colleges including medicine, nursing, pharmacy, dentistry and public health. Our graduate medical education programs enroll over 700 residents and fellows in 81 programs across our system.

Nebraska Medicine, our long-time partner clinical delivery system, with physically connected facilities, shares many of the same campus locations, operates dozens of ambulatory care sites and inpatient facilities with our faculty, students, residents and staff. With well over one million outpatient visits, tens of thousands of surgical procedures, a world class NCI cancer center, cardiovascular center and more, UNMC enjoys longstanding patient quality, safety and experience ratings and rankings by Vizient, USNWR, Magnet and many others, as among the very best in the nation.



Fred & Pamela Buffett Cancer Center

For more than 150 years our students, faculty and staff have strived to meet the medical needs of Nebraskans statewide, including our veterans—those who have worn the cloth of our nation and protected our freedom. Our relationships with the VA and other entities serving servicemen and women are broad and deep, many of which are bound in contractual relationships, joint appointments and clinical rotations. Even more are bound by dual professional families, camaraderie, friendship and community support. Together we have continued to work well and have continued to grow to serve our communities and, specifically, our veterans.



The past few decades saw many unsuccessful attempts to replace both the 75-year-old inpatient and outpatient facilities serving our veterans on their designated campus known as the Nebraska Western Iowa Veterans Administration Hospital. These attempts were unsuccessful for a variety of reasons, mostly related to an inability to secure appropriate funding in spite of the best efforts of our federal delegation and the communities that we collectively serve. However, a decade ago, we finally found success through an innovative leadership model that allowed creation of a public-private partnership through the institution of a not-for-profit 501-C3 corporate structure. The 501-C3, known as the Veterans Clinic Development Corporation, entered into a partnership with the Veterans Administration Central Office under the leadership of the Secretary of the VA to plan, build and then donate a large ambulatory care center to the VA on their campus. This project was completed in 2021 and in the years since has served a large majority of all outpatient diagnostic, procedural and interventional care.



Nebraska Western Iowa VA  
Ambulatory Clinic & Surgicenter

This project has been recognized as a true pillar of success in that the funding through the federal taxpayer dollars, along with the funding through the private philanthropic community under the leadership of a small private not-for-profit corporation, served to turn this dream into a reality ahead of schedule and under budget. This success was only made possible through the creative energy of the leadership of the VA leadership, the local leadership here in Nebraska, and the wisdom and generosity of Omaha's private philanthropic community. A magical formula now known as the CHIP-IN was created by bipartisan action of Congress and signed into law in December of 2019.



UNMC Academic Medical Center - Phase 1

In recent years, the University of Nebraska Medical Center has identified a significant need to replace several of our own aging academic medical center facilities on our Omaha campus. While we have added over \$1 billion in facilities to our medical center campuses over the past decade, a new project known as Project Health will produce what we believe to be one of the finest academic clinical centers of its type across all of the health professions in the nation. Appended to this document are architect renderings and descriptive briefings of the role and mission for this 1.36 million square foot \$2.19 billion facility. Again, the capital stack for this amazing project represents a true public-private partnership with the state of Nebraska, the city of Omaha, the University of Nebraska Medical Center, and of course the generosity of private philanthropic community.

Demolition and site preparation work has begun on the 7.7-acre site, and we anticipate construction to begin this summer. A campus map of our primary Omaha site is included below outlining the location of this project and the interconnectivity to the remainder of the campus.

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of Project Health facilities, present a unique opportunity for further collaboration to better serve our nation's veterans and a model for the future.

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UNMC Prepared Campus  
Academic Medical Center Site

By utilizing private sector efficiencies and philanthropic support, we can significantly reduce construction timelines and costs, ensuring timely delivery of quality services to those who have served our country.

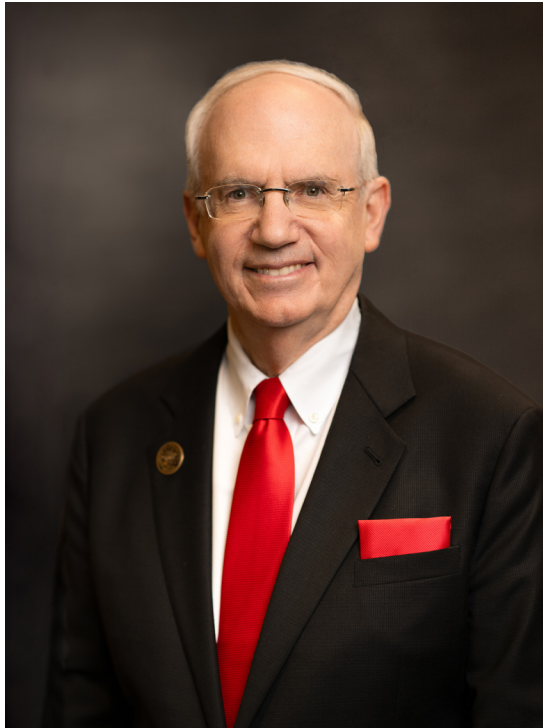
As mentioned above, adequate land is currently available and could be transferred either by sale or lease if required to do so. The creation of a public-private partnership will markedly reduce the taxpayer cost of this new facility for our veterans that would literally be just feet away from the existing world-class ambulatory clinic. Co-location would

also permit partnering to share important state of the are ancillary resources such as utilities, parking, central sterile supply and many others. The city of Omaha has already completed major roadway and utilities upgrades to support the scale of this combined project. An indirect benefit of this would be to free up sufficient space on the VA campus for other purposes which is desperately needed to better serve our veterans.

*The call to action is to enter a public-private partnership with the University of Nebraska, Nebraska Medicine and/or the Veterans Development Corp to plan, build and operate a new inpatient facility on the UNMC Omaha campus to provide for generations to come of world-class care, develop the next generation of supporting multidisciplinary workforce, and connect transformational bioscience research to serve those who have served our nation.*

## ABOUT

# PRESIDENT JEFFREY P. GOLD, M.D.



Jeffrey P. Gold, M.D., became the ninth president of the University of Nebraska System on July 1, 2024. He leads the four-campus system, which enrolls nearly 50,000 students and employs 16,000 faculty and staff. As president, he serves as chief spokesman and CEO for the system, which operates on a \$3 billion annual budget and includes a Big Ten institution, an academic health sciences center, and key research institutes.

Previously, Dr. Gold was chancellor of the University of Nebraska Medical Center (UNMC) from 2014 to 2024 and chaired the Nebraska Medicine Health System board. He also served as Provost and Executive Vice President of the University of Nebraska System and concurrently as chancellor of the University of Nebraska at Omaha.

A nationally recognized leader in higher education and health care, Dr. Gold holds tenured faculty appointments in medicine and public health. He has

authored over 200 peer-reviewed manuscripts, 40 books and chapters, and given more than 300 keynote presentations.

Dr. Gold earned his engineering degree from Cornell University and his M.D. from Weill Cornell College of Medicine, followed by surgical training at New York-Presbyterian Hospital, Memorial Sloan Kettering, and Harvard-affiliated hospitals. He is board-certified in surgery and thoracic surgery, specializing in cardiac procedures.

He serves on key economic development boards and has held leadership roles in over 100 national organizations. He has advised elected officials on education, research, and clinical care. Dr. Gold and his wife, a fellow physician, have two children and two grandchildren.





Figure 1. Nebraska Western Iowa VA Ambulatory Clinic & Surgicenter



Figure 2. Surgical suite in the Nebraska Western Iowa VA Ambulatory Clinic & Surgicenter





Figure 3. Exterior of the Negatively Pressurized Conex unit



Figure 4. CSTARS personnel touring the Negatively Pressurized Conex unit as part of contract with the Department of Defense





Figure 8.  
 Rendering of  
 proposed Project  
 Health facility



Figure 9.  
 Rendering of  
 proposed Project  
 Health facility

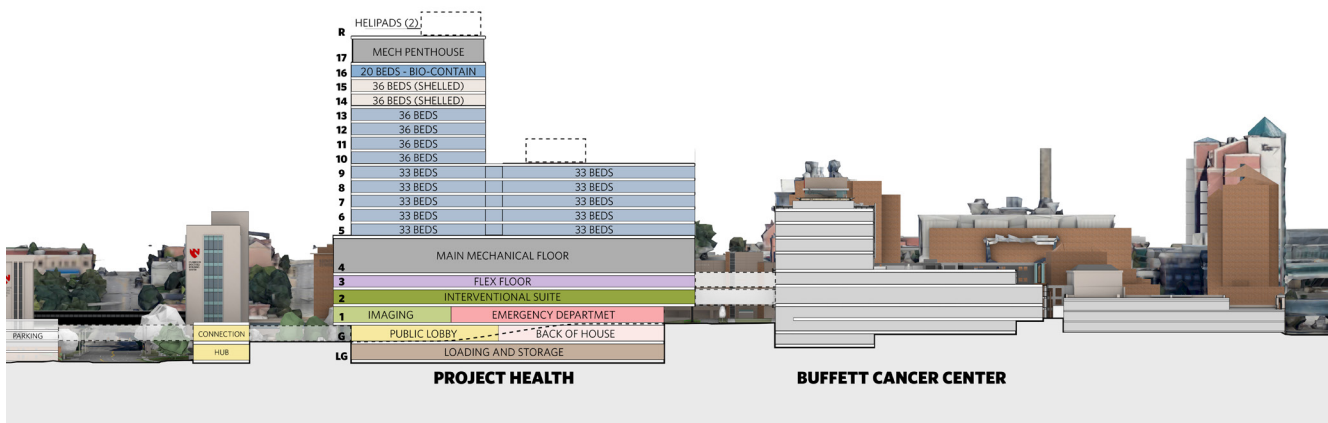


Figure 10. Stacking of proposed Project Health facility