

**Statement by James S. Hartsell**  
**Executive Director**  
**Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs**

**Health Subcommittee, Committee on Veterans' Affairs, U.S. House of Representatives**

*April 24, 2025*

*We operate nine state veterans' homes in Florida with a total of 1,102 beds. Eight are skilled nursing facilities and one is a domiciliary offering assisted living. Florida's State Veterans' Nursing Homes are among the top nursing homes in the state.*

*The relationship between the VA and Florida is good; however, the VA long-term care system has historically struggled to keep up with current national long-term care models. Highlighting home and community-based care should be encouraged. We recommend VA support States and Territories that desire to integrate a long-term care campus that allows them to offer additional services to Veterans to remain in their homes in the community.*

*We recommend changing the static model of traditional nursing home beds to one that provides Veterans with a more robust venue of long-term care services. Florida is planning a 120-bed State Veterans' Nursing Home that includes adjoining Adult Health Day Care, outpatient rehabilitation services and a community wellness center for local Veterans. We feel the decades-old model for strictly long-term care beds is restrictive and does not reflect the needs of today's aging Veteran. Additionally, our proposed model will allow Veterans to access health care services while providing an avenue for camaraderie that can improve their health outcomes.*

*Previous attempts to provide these updated services in existing State Veterans' Home sites have been denied by the VA, citing 20-year moratoriums imposed on original construction grants designed solely for long-term care beds. The denial is based on VA's interpretation of 38 CFR § 59.110.*

*Providing enhanced services to local Veterans in areas with a small VA footprint saves travel time and keeps Veterans in their homes, allowing much-needed respite care for their family members and caregivers. The added socialization combats isolation and conversely helps combat veteran suicide.*

*VA's State Veteran Home Construction Grant Program should reflect these new national models of long-term care as States seek to expand their services for Veterans. We also recommend an overall increase in funding for the State Veteran Home Construction Grant Program to combat a backlog of vital projects. Previous years funding has made only a small dent in expanding and enhancing long-term care services for our Veterans. Many needed construction and rehabilitation efforts are delayed by years due to inadequate funding. According to the VA, the State of Florida is currently short of more than 2,900 Veterans' Nursing Home beds. At the current rate of funding, it would take decades to fill the gap. We believe increased funding, coupled with access to non-institutional long-term care, can provide a bridge for our aging Veterans' long-term care needs.*

*In Florida, it costs nearly twice the reimbursement rate provided by VA to pay for care of Veterans in our 150-bed Domiciliary home. We recommend VA review their compensation rates for long-term care, as reimbursements to States for Veterans in Veterans' Domiciliary Homes vastly understate the true cost of healthcare.*

*We appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony and continue our collaborative work with the VA to enhance care for our Nation's Veterans.*