

**STATEMENT OF  
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VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION  
DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS  
BEFORE THE  
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON HEALTH  
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
ON  
DIGNITY DENIED: THE CASE FOR REFORM AT STATE VETERANS HOMES**

**APRIL 29, 2025**

Good afternoon, Chairwoman Miller-Meeks, Ranking Member Brownley, and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee. My name is Dr. Scotte Hartronft, and I am the Executive Director of the Office of Geriatrics and Extended Care at the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). I am honored to discuss the strategic approach VA employs, which results in high-quality health care outcomes and support for the Nation's heroes at State Veterans Homes (SVH). SVHs are owned, operated, and managed by the states. VA's role as it relates to SVHs is as a support to ensure Veterans receive the high-quality care which meets the Department's standards, through annual certification and recognition surveys, Medical Sharing Agreements, and grants to construct, renovate, or repair State owned facilities.

Currently, the Department supports 172 SVHs, which administer a combined 166 Nursing Home Programs, 47 Domiciliary Care Programs, and 3 Adult Day Health Care Programs. To participate in the SVH program and its benefits, VA must formally recognize a care facility as an SVH through the certification process and a recognition survey. Along with compliance with VA standards, a recognition survey requires adherence to all applicable Federal, state, and local laws including the relevant professional standards for VA purposes to recognize the home as an SVH.

After formal recognition, VA conducts at least one unannounced annual survey at each facility to ensure compliance with VA standards. The VA surveys cover 200 clinical standards, fire and life safety standards, administrative standards, and fiscal standards.

Many of the standards are based on the CMS nursing home standards but others are VA and SVH unique. Any areas of non-compliance identified on surveys are addressed through corrective action plans in collaboration with the Veterans Health Administration survey team. During the corrective action plan follow-up period an ad-hoc for cause full survey can be completed if felt necessary. Compliance with VA regulations under 38 C.F.R. part 51 and VA's survey and certification process is required for SVHs that provide nursing home care, domiciliary care, or adult day health care to remain eligible to receive per diem payments or participate in the State Home Construction Grant Program (SHCGP). VA's survey process mirrors the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) for long-term care facilities.

VA offers support to SVHs by permitting recognized SVHs to enter into Medical Sharing Agreements with their local VA Medical Centers to procure additional clinical services or secure discounted pharmaceutical prices. The SVH's that are CMS certified also on average outperform the US nursing home star rating on their CMS surveys. To maintain SVH recognition, VHA may also provide funds to ensure adequate levels of nursing staff. In fiscal year 2024, VA approved \$4.7 million for the 17 states and 47 SVHs that applied for Federal funds to support programs that hire or retain nursing staff.

SHCGP is a partnership between VA and the states to construct, renovate or repair state-owned and operated nursing homes, domiciliaries, and/or adult day health care facilities. VA provides reimbursement of up to 65% of allowable costs to states for the construction and renovation of SVHs. The number of awards provided each year depends on the number of projects, their costs, and the amount of appropriation received in the fiscal year. VA is responsible for determining the priority for funding facility improvements, which may include bed replacements, mold removal, and repairs to structural hazards to assist SVHs in providing high-quality care for Veterans.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, VA remains steadfast in its dedication to continuous improvement in the oversight of SVHs. We appreciate the oversight from the Subcommittee and look forward to answering any questions you may have.