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Budget Cut Proposals Would Hurt Veterans

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 21, 2023 1:02 pm

WASHINGTON — While the President’s Budget details a plan to honor our country’s sacred obligation to care for America’s Veterans, their families, caregivers, and survivors, the proposal to cut a broad range of critical programs by 22% would threaten critical services for Veterans – both at VA and across the federal government. **The proposed 22% budget cut to VA would:**

- **Threaten Medical Care for Veterans.** The proposal would mean 30 million fewer Veteran outpatient visits,

and 81,000 jobs lost across the Veterans Health Administration, leaving Veterans unable to get appointments for care including wellness visits, cancer screenings, mental health services, and substance use disorder treatment.

- **Undermine Access to Telehealth.** Access to remote care through telehealth is essential for Veterans, particularly in rural areas. By reducing funding for necessary IT infrastructure and support, the proposal would impair VA's ability to expand video-to-home telehealth services and limit the availability of medical equipment that can be provided to Veterans so they can attend important telehealth appointments from home.
- **Worsen Wait Times for Benefits.** Under the proposal, the Veterans Benefits Administration would eliminate more than 6,000 staff, increasing the disability claims backlog by an estimated 134,000 claims and forcing Veterans and their surviving loved ones to wait longer for the benefits they have earned, including pensions, life insurance, GI Bill educational supports, and employment services.
- **Prevent Construction on the Health Care Facilities that Veterans need.** Veterans deserve to receive care in state-of-the-art facilities, but the median VA hospital was built nearly 60 years ago – compared to just 13 years ago in the private sector. This proposal would cut up to \$565 million for major construction projects, including critical clinical upgrades to hospitals and clinics. These cuts would negatively impact Veteran health care across America.
- **Fail to Honor the Memory of All Veterans.** The proposal would require VA's National Cemetery Administration to eliminate approximately 500 staff, jeopardize NCA's ability to maintain the final resting place of Veterans to national shrine standards, and

delay the opening of 5 new national cemeteries that will serve nearly 1.6 million Veterans and eligible family members.

Beyond the direct impact on Veterans who use VA, these proposed cuts would negatively impact Veterans who access critical services across the federal government.

Specifically, these proposed cuts would:

- **Cut Housing for Veterans.** Every Veteran deserves a good, safe home in this country they fought to defend. The proposal would eliminate funding for Housing Choice Vouchers for as many as 50,000 Veterans, putting them at greater risk of homelessness.
- **Increase Food Insecurity for Veterans.** About 1.3 million Veterans rely on SNAP. This proposal would take food assistance away from Veterans who are older by adding burdensome, bureaucratic requirements, and it would limit states' flexibility to protect especially vulnerable people currently subject to work requirements. That would increase the likelihood that Veterans and their families go hungry.
- **Deprive Veterans of mental health, substance use, and other health services.** This proposal would mean deep cuts to Department of Health and Human Services community mental health centers, mental health and substance use prevention grants, and other public health programs. Supporting Veterans and their families in the community, especially those not enrolled in VA health care, has been a priority for HHS and these cuts could reduce access to timely care and services.
- **Eliminate Job Training and Other Supports to Homeless Veterans.** The proposal would mean that 4,200 fewer Veterans experiencing or at risk of homelessness would receive job training, counseling,

and job readiness services provided through the Department of Labor's Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Program.

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Veterans with questions about their health care and benefits (including GI Bill).

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