

STATEMENT OF BRIGADIER GENERAL TOM LANDWERMEYER, USA (RET.) - 2025

14 MAY 25

Mr. Landwermer:

Chairman Van Orden, Ranking Member Pappas, and distinguished members of the Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity, my sincere thanks for granting Homes For Our Troops, or HFOT, the opportunity to testify before the subcommittee to review the VA's Specially Adapted Housing, Adaptive Automobile, and Adaptive Sports Programs, to help assess how effectively these programs serve Veterans across the country.

To date, Homes For Our Troops has built and donated 409 specially adapted custom homes in 45 states to the most severely injured post-9/11 Veterans. We currently have 78 ongoing projects, with over 100 Veterans in the application process. We use the SAH grant eligibility requirements as a screening criterion for our program, and are quite familiar with the VA's SAH grant program, but are less familiar with the adaptive automobile and sports programs.

Over the past 20 years, HFOT has developed a close working relationship with the VA SAH office to better assist our Veterans, enjoying a mutually positive and productive working relationship. We communicate often with the SAH office as we support our Veterans and consistently find their personnel to be helpful and responsive. When the COVID pandemic restricted VA travel, they were open to accepting HFOT staff photos of the adaptations in our homes that the SAH office required for their approval process, expediting the SAH process for these deserving men and women. When Congress was considering the Ryan Kules and Paul Benne Specially Adaptive Housing Improvement Act, we provided feedback from our Veterans to our VA SAH points of contact.

Last month, our staff surveyed the veterans in our program about their familiarity and experience with the VA's Specially Adapted Housing, Adaptive Automobile, and Adaptive Sports Programs. Our testimony today is based on these survey results.

While our Veterans have a basic understanding of the SAH grant and eligibility requirements, roughly half of the Veterans who responded say they have minimal knowledge regarding subsequent uses, and specifically how often they can use it and how it increases annually. Half find the application easy to complete, with 20% finding it difficult. Many Veterans experienced inconsistent procedures and approval standards

between agents, even in the same Region. Working nationwide, HFOT has found variances in procedures and interpretations across regions and agents, and has provided that feedback to the SAH office.

About 50% of the Veterans report being familiar with the Adaptive Automobile grant program. Nearly 60% of Veterans polled struggled with the vehicle-grant application process, finding it complex and difficult to understand. There is also much confusion concerning if and when a Veteran can apply for a second grant, and how this relates to the VA program that provides reimbursement for adaptations to an automobile.

Nearly 80% of our veterans have little to no knowledge of the VA Adaptive Sports and Recreation program or its offerings. Of those who actually compete at the national or Olympic level, 90% stated they were unfamiliar with the Olympic Team and Team USA monthly grant stipend. Veterans also noted the need for clearer eligibility rules and vendor approval processes, as well as more flexibility for choosing adaptive gear based on their injuries.

The VA offers many outstanding programs for injured veterans. A focus on consistency across the regions and among agents, more streamlined and understandable application procedures, and creating better awareness about these great programs will enhance the VA's support to veterans nationwide.

We are grateful for our long-time partnership with the VA, and appreciate all that they and you do for our veterans. Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today, and I look forward to your questions.