



February 16, 2023

The Honorable Jon Tester, Chairman
U.S. Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs
825-A Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Jerry Moran, Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs
412 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
U.S. Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs
154 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mike Rounds
U.S. Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs
716 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Tester, Ranking Member Moran, Senator Murray, and Senator Rounds:

On behalf of the undersigned leading organizations that represent the senior living industry, including assisted living owners, operators, and aging services providers, we want to thank you for your leadership in introducing the "Expanding Veterans' Options for Long Term Care Act." We believe this bipartisan bill creates a commonsense approach to identifying and securing greater options and opportunities for our veterans to access long-term care supportive services.

The proposed 3-year pilot program created by this legislation will assess the effectiveness of providing eligible veterans with the option to move into an assisted living community for their supportive care services. This is an economically sound and sensible approach to demonstrate the benefits of assisted living to not only the resident veteran, but to their families and friends. Assisted living offers the best of personal and supportive care services with a team of professionals in a home environment where individuals can continue to live a meaningful life that promotes social engagement, nutrition and wellbeing. We are confident this program will demonstrate the benefits of assisted living to not only the resident veteran, but to their families and friends, offering additional options to our veterans in their time of need.

The timing is right for such action given what we know about aging demographics in our country and the corresponding demand for supportive services. As you are aware, key findings in a report to Congress by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), Veterans Health Administration (VHA), on the current and projected needs for Long Term Services and Supports (LTSS) makes a sound case for advancing this legislation:

- The fastest growing segment of the Veteran population are those Veterans over the age of 85.
- The percent of Veterans 85 or older, that are eligible for nursing home care will increase nearly 535% over the next 20 years (from 61,000 to 387,000).
- Approximately 5% of Veterans in Community Nursing Homes (CNH) at VA expense do not require daily skilled nursing interventions.
- The annual Cost of a CNH placement was \$120,701 in 2020.

- The annual Cost of an Assisted Living Placement is \$51, 600—half the cost.
- VA would realize a potential nursing home savings of \$69,101 per placement per year.

This proposal calls for feedback from veterans, requires geographic diversity to ensure rural participation, limits participation to Medicaid certified facilities, and provides oversight for participating assisted living communities.

Senior living, including assisted living communities, evolved to offer a residential alternative to nursing homes and provide a safe version of home that prioritizes care, services, and independence. It covers a range of service-enriched housing aimed at older adults who want or need specific service amenities or help with activities of daily living. They differ from nursing homes in purpose, levels of care, residences, and lifestyle. Senior living is home to approximately 2 million residents.

The demand for long-term care services is not limited to veterans. The number of seniors needing long term care is expected to rise from 6.3 million in 2015 to an estimated 15 million by 2050, while during this same period the number of unpaid family caregivers is expected to decline¹. “Someone turning age 65 today has almost a 70% chance of needing some type of long-term care services and supports in their remaining years².”

As a country we must prepare for this demand for long-term care and ensure that seniors have options for quality settings such as assisted living that are also cost effective. We thank you and look forward to working with you and your staff to advance this legislation during the 118th Congress to ensure our veterans have access to the best long-term care and services at the time they need it most. They deserve it.

Sincerely,

American Seniors Housing Association (ASHA)

Argentum

Leading Age

National Center for Assisted Living (NCAL)

¹ <https://www.nasi.org/learn/long-term-services-and-supports/demand-for-long-term-services-and-supports-will-rise/#:~:text=The%20rise%20in%20the%20aging,increase%20by%20only%2012%20percent.>

² <https://acl.gov/ltc/basic-needs/how-much-care-will-you-need>

Cc: Senate Veterans Affairs Committee Members