



HOUSE COMMITTEE ON **VETERANS' AFFAIRS**

Chairman Phil Roe, M.D.

H.R. 4242: The VA Care in the Community Act

Background:

Nearly three years ago when committee oversight and subsequent media reports uncovered that veterans around the country were facing unacceptable wait times for VA care, Congress passed the Veterans Access, Choice and Accountability Act ([P.L. 113-146](#)), which established the Choice Program. The Choice Program allowed veterans who meet certain qualifications to seek care from health care providers in the community. Since fiscal year 2014, community care appointments have increased by 61% overall, and in FY 2016 alone, 30% of all VA appointments were held in the community rather than in VA medical facilities.

Though VA has been collaborating with community providers to treat veterans since 1945, the recent increase in veteran demand for community care has highlighted serious issues and inefficiencies within the VA's community care system. For example, VA currently uses six different methods to refer veteran patients to community providers. These six different methods often conflict with one another, creating confusion for veterans, community providers and VA employees alike.

This legislation would consolidate VA's existing community care programs into one cohesive program and would modernize VA's medical claims processing system to ensure that community providers can expect to be paid on time for the care they provide to veterans on VA's behalf. It would further require VA to conduct periodic local capacity and market assessments to identify how gaps in care can be addressed through improvements to both internal and external capacity, standardize the rates VA pays to community providers and authorize VA to enter into provider agreements for needed care when contracts are not available or achievable.

The Message:

- VA's care in the community programs increase veterans' access to timely and quality health care.
- Demand for community care programs has increased substantially since Congress created the Choice Program in 2014.
- This legislation would consolidate VA's community care programs into a seamless, integrated VA system of care.