

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

CHAIRMAN MIKE BOST

H.R. 542, as amended: The Elizabeth Dole Home and Community Based Services for Veterans and Caregivers Act of 2023

Background:

Over 3 million veterans are aged 65 or older, making up half of VA's active population. As more veterans reach this point in their lives, many are choosing to age at home, also referred to as "aging-in-place" instead of going into long-term care facilities such as a nursing home. Expanding VA's home healthcare services is a necessity in achieving the evolving veteran population's preferences.

VA offers a wide range of long term care and support, through both institutional and noninstitutional programs. In recent years, in accordance with growing veteran preference, VA increased utilization of noninstitutional programs - which VA refers to as Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS). Unfortunately, access to these programs have been inconsistently applied throughout the VA system. HCBS support independence and are generally more cost effective than institutional care services, with the annual per veteran costs for nursing home care being multiple times the annual costs for HCBS. Home health care benefits the veteran, the caregiver, and VA in many ways. *The Elizabeth Dole Home and Community Based Services for Veterans and Caregivers Act (the Dole Act)* would make a number of improvements and expansions to VA's HCBS programs to support more veterans and their caregivers.

The Message:

The Dole Act would expand VA's geriatric or extended care services to veterans in non-institutional settings by:

- Increasing the VA expenditure cap for non-institutional care alternatives for nursing home care from 65% to 100%.
- Expanding coordination between VA and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services' Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly (PACE).
- Offering the Veteran-Directed Care Program, the Homemaker Home Health Aide Program, the Home-Based Primary Program, and the Purchased Skilled Home Care Program at **all** VA medical centers.
- Having VA take a more active role in helping veterans and their caregivers navigate the multiple options that may be available to them as they consider long-term care.
- Establishing a three-year pilot program to encourage workforce growth in homemaker and health aide services.
- Reviewing the structure and goals of VA's Geriatric and long-term services, to ensure consistency in program management, eliminate service gaps at the VA medical center level, and ensure veterans' access to HCBS.
- Extending VA home loan funding fees.