

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

CHAIRMAN MIKE BOST

H.R. 592: The Department of Veterans Affairs Electronic Health Record Modernization Improvement Act

Background:

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has implemented the Oracle Cerner electronic health record (EHR) system at five of 171 medical centers since 2018. VA acknowledges the system has created unacceptable levels of productivity losses, patient safety risks, and staff burnout at these five small and medium-sized medical facilities. VA's annual All-Employee Survey indicated that employees at these facilities are less engaged, more exhausted, and have lower workplace satisfaction than staff at the average VA medical facility. In a recent user survey by KLAS Research, an overwhelming 78 percent of Oracle Cerner EHR users at VA disagreed or strongly disagreed that the system enables them to deliver high quality care—the lowest rating for any EHR system surveyed. Because of these poor results, implementation of the system at additional sites has been paused through June 2023.

The VA Electronic Health Record Modernization Improvement Act would require VA and Oracle Cerner to demonstrate significant improvements in the EHR system before installing it at additional medical centers. Specifically, each VA medical center's director, chief of staff, and network director would be required to certify that the EHR system has been correctly configured for the site, the staff and infrastructure are adequate to support it, and it would not negatively impact safety, quality, or current wait times. Additionally, VA and Oracle Cerner could not commence go-live preparations at additional medical centers until the Secretary certifies that the system has achieved 99.9 uptime and technical fixes, as directed in the contract, have been made.

The Message:

- Far too many VA employees and veterans have been negatively impacted by the Oracle Cerner EHR system for the current project plan to continue at other VA sites before major improvements are made.
- VA and Oracle Cerner must demonstrate that the EHR is safe and effective before installing it at additional VA medical centers.
- Until the EHR system supports high quality care, it is counterproductive for medical centers to pull their staffs away from direct patient care to prepare to install it.
- *The VA Electronic Health Record Modernization Improvement Act* will rightfully ensure that VA medical centers are confident in their ability to maintain a high level of care before they make the transition to the Oracle Cerner EHR system. Anything less than that is unacceptable for veterans and their families.