



May 4, 2021

Honorable Jon Tester, Chairman
U.S. Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs
825-A Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510-6050

Honorable Jerry Moran, Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs
412 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510-6050

Dear Chairman Tester and Ranking Member Moran,

On behalf of the American Seniors Housing Association (ASHA), I am writing in support of S. 1071 "VA Aid Act of 2021." ASHA's members own and operate the full range of professionally managed senior living communities including independent living, assisted living, memory care, and continuing care retirement communities (CCRCs). ASHA represents over 500 companies who collectively own and operate more than 700,000 units across the country.

Senior living across the United States is home to nearly 2 million older adults, of which almost half have served their country in the U.S. military or are spouses of Veterans. The average senior living resident is 85 years old and needs assistance with activities of daily living (ADLs), including eating, bathing, dressing, walking, and toileting. U.S. Veterans are eligible for the Veteran's Aid and Attendance benefit to access housing with services, such as assisted living and senior living, to aid with ADLs.

The VA Aid Act of 2021 would authorize the Secretary of Veterans Affairs (VA) to carry out a pilot program to provide pension claim enhancement assistance to individuals submitting claims for pension from the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes. Veterans applying for benefits are currently rejected at a rate of 80% due to backlogs at the Department of Veterans Affairs. This legislation would allow for the VA to contract with a third-party entity to improve efficiency in addressing applications for pension claims. The bill would also prevent predatory companies from taking advantage of Veterans trying to access benefits.

Our nation's Veterans have sacrificed much for their country and deserve fair and efficient access to the benefits to which they are entitled.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at david@ashaliving.org, or Jeanne McGlynn Delgado, VP of Government Affairs at jeanne@ashaliving.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "David Schless".

David Schless
President