

POLICY BRIEF

Expanding Veterans' Options for Long Term Care

ASHA ACTION REQUEST:

Co-sponsor S. 495/H.R. 1815, the Expanding Veterans Options for Long Term Care Act. It creates a pilot program to assess the effectiveness of offering veterans the opportunity to reside in an assisted living community to access their care needs. Much like the overall population, the fastest growing segment of the Veteran population are those over the age of 85, which currently stands at around 1.3 million. The number of veterans 85 or older that are eligible for nursing home care provided by the Veterans Administration will increase nearly 535% over the next 20 years (from 61,000 to 387,000), according to the VA. This pilot program offers new thinking on how to serve this population efficiently, compassionately and with demonstrable cost savings.

Key Reasons to Support S. 495 and H.R. 1815

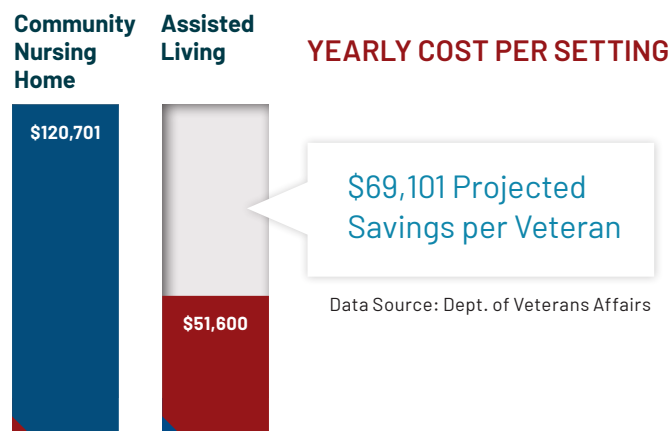
The cost to the VA to care for these veterans is not sustainable and options must be considered to lower these costs. The VA must rebalance its investment in Long Term Services and Supports (LTSS). Therefore, Congress is proposing to create a three-year pilot program to assess the effectiveness of providing eligible veterans with the option to move into an assisted living community for their supportive care services. The Expanding Veterans Options for Long Term Care Act enjoys bi-partisan support in Congress, is supported by the VA, several veterans' service organizations (VSOs) and represents a commonsense approach to securing greater options for long-term care supportive services.

Additional Points

- ▼ The cost savings to the VA would be significant given the cost differential between Community Nursing Homes (CNH) (\$120,701 per year) and assisted living communities (\$51,600 per year)
- ▼ By utilizing the AL option, the VA would realize a potential savings of \$69,101 per veteran per year.
- ▼ Approximately 5% of Veterans in CNHs do not require daily skilled nursing interventions.
- ▼ This proposal calls for feedback from veterans, requires geographic diversity to ensure rural participation, limits participation to Medicaid certified communities, and provides reporting and oversight for pilot participants.

ASHA Position

ASHA is strongly supporting these bills and has led coalition efforts to advance them in the House and Senate. We believe this pilot program will demonstrate the value proposition of assisted living. Senior living, including assisted living communities, offers a residential alternative to nursing homes and provides a safe version of home that prioritizes care, services, and independence. It is already home to thousands of veterans and their spouses. 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. Since the pilot participation must be Medicaid certified communities, the program will underscore the assisted living benefits that are available to a lower income veteran.



Outlook

There is strong support in Congress for taking care of our veteran's long term care needs. The challenge is the congressional calendar and the competition for must pass legislation as the clock winds down this session. However, both the House and Senate have held hearings on the bills and the House moved quicker to mark up their bill in subcommittee paving the way for Full Committee action. The Senate is expected to mark up their bill this fall. Co-sponsorship is critical to demonstrating solid support behind the legislation. ASHA and our coalition partners will work to build the co-sponsorship base and other strategies to create awareness and urgency to get this done this year.

What They're Saying

"The Expanding Veterans' Options for Long Term Care Act is groundbreaking legislation that would authorize VA to support assisted living programs for aging and disabled veterans who would otherwise require more expensive nursing home care. NASVH strongly supports this innovative legislation to create new long-term care options, which includes assisted living pilot programs at state veterans homes."

– **National Association of State Veterans Homes (NASVH)**

"This provides VA the critical flexibility for a pilot program to help provide essential care and support services to a rapidly growing population of aging or disabled veterans who are not able to live at home. VA has acknowledged the value of rebalancing its long-term care services and this program will help give the department the authority to do so."

– **Military Officers Association of America (MOAA)**

"Over the next two decades, our nation will see a fivefold increase in the number of veterans requiring long-term care. This massive expected influx underscores the need for the VA to be prepared and equipped to ensure these veterans have the care they need to live as independently as possible. The Expanding Veterans' Options for Long Term Care Act would expand long-term care options for aging, disabled veterans and allow more veterans to live their lives with respect and dignity."

– **Disabled American Veterans (DAV)**

"By expanding veterans' long term care options as the legislation provides, we allow more independence while creating cost savings for the VA—something we should all be able to support."

– **Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA)**

"By establishing a three-year pilot program for eligible veterans to receive assisted living care paid for by the VA, the Expanding Veterans' Options for Long Term Care Act would allow aging veterans to live more independently while receiving the level of care that most appropriately fits their needs. These resources are critical in serving the needs of veterans living with Alzheimer's and dementia, including those who have served in uniform."

– **Alzheimer's Association**

"AARP, on behalf of our 38 million members and all older Americans nationwide, is pleased to support the Expanding Veterans' Options for Long Term Care Act. We applaud the bipartisan work of Senators Tester, Moran, Murray and Rounds to give veterans more options for how and where they can get the long-term care they need."

– **AARP**

SENATE:

- ▼ **February 16:** S. 495 Introduced by SVAC Chairman Tester (D-MT) and Ranking Member Moran (R-KS)
- ▼ **July 12:** SVAC Hearing
- ▼ **Fall 2023:** Expected SVAC Markup of S. 495

HOUSE:

- ▼ **March 27:** H.R. 1815 Introduced by Rep. Slotkin (D-MI-07) and Rep. Steil (R-WI-01)
- ▼ **June 21:** HVAC Health Subcommittee Hearing
- ▼ **July 18:** HVAC Health Subcommittee Mark-up

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