



NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS
WASHINGTON, DC

October 26, 2021

The Honorable John Moolenaar
U.S. House of Representatives
117 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Lisa McClain
U.S. House of Representatives
218 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Moolenaar and Representative McClain:

As the President & CEO of Student Veterans of America (SVA), and on behalf of over 1,500 chapters located at colleges and universities nationwide, I wanted to express our support for both of your bills addressing systemic flaws in the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Patient Advocacy program within the Veterans Health Administration (VHA). This program is an important tool for veterans to express concerns about their treatment and resolve intractable problems with their care providers.

In recent years, however, the PA system has been hampered by issues that limit its effectiveness and ability to be the strongest advocate on behalf of concerned veterans. One issue is the number of Patient Advocates (PA) is too low. VA requires at least one PA at each VA Medical Center (VAMC), but due to the wording in its recently-updated governing regulation, VHA Directive 1003.04, instead of placing at least one PA in each VAMC, VA has chosen to place a single PA in multiple VAMCs. This has led to a bottleneck in the services provided by the system, diminishing its quality and responsiveness to complaints.

Fortunately, Representative Moolenaar's bill, provides a substantial solution to this problem by requiring no fewer than one PA for every 13,500 veterans enrolled in the system. With this requirement, we believe the Patient Advocacy program will see stronger returns and superior representation of veterans seeking assistance.

Another issue is the Patient Advocacy Tracking System (PATS). Representative McClain's bill, the *Patient Advocate Tracker Act*, requires VA to create an electronic system that allows veterans to file complaints and track the status of those complaints in real time. It is important to note that this filing and tracking system already exists for VA, they simply do not provide such information to veterans. With this solution in hand, veterans will have access to updated and timely information regarding their complaints, leading to decreased frustration and a higher quality, transparent experience from VA.

When discussing the Patient Advocacy system at VA, we would be remiss if we did not highlight the two recent audit reports from VHA's Office of the Inspector General and from the Government Accountability Office.^{1,2} There is clearly a need for attention and reform within the program, and these two bills are excellent examples of making the changes necessary to improve the lives of our nation's veterans.

SVA thanks you both for your leadership on these issues and for championing these important pieces of legislation on behalf of veterans. Please feel free to contact Justin Monk directly if you should have any

¹ Veterans Health Administration, Office of the Inspector General. Audit of the Patient Advocacy Program.
<<https://www.va.gov/oig/pubs/VAOIG-15-05379-146.pdf>>

² Government Accountability Office, VA Health Care Improved Guidance and Oversight Needed for the Patient Advocacy Program.
<<https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-18-356.pdf>>



questions on this matter. He can be reached by phone at 202.223.4710 or by email at justin.monk@studentveterans.org.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jared Lyon", is positioned above the typed name.

Jared Lyon, MPA
National President & CEO

