



**American Hospital
Association®**

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May 22, 2018

The Honorable Johnny Isakson
United States Senate
Committee on Veterans' Affairs
412 Russell Senate Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jon Tester
United States Senate
Committee on Veterans' Affairs
412 Russell Senate Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Isakson and Ranking Member Tester:

On behalf of our nearly 5,000 member hospitals, health systems and other health care organizations, and our clinician partners – including more than 270,000 affiliated physicians, 2 million nurses and other caregivers – and the 43,000 health care leaders who belong to our professional membership groups, the American Hospital Association (AHA) supports S. 2372, the VA Maintaining Internal Systems and Strengthening Integrated Outside Networks Act of 2018 (VA MISSION Act of 2018).

America's hospitals and health systems are strongly committed to providing care to veterans in their communities and honoring their service to our country. We are pleased that the VA MISSION ACT will consolidate multiple Veterans Affairs (VA) community care programs into one permanent "Veterans Community Care Program." This will provide continuity for veterans to access care outside of the VA's medical network and decrease confusion about eligibility criteria and covered services. We applaud doing away with the 30-day wait or 40-mile distance eligibility requirement that arbitrarily restricts access to health care. Instead, the legislation aims to provide veterans with access to the right care, at the right time, in the right setting by expanding access to community care.

In addition, we are pleased that the VA is addressing problems with prompt payment by setting deadlines for timely payments to community providers. We are hopeful these new standards will prove to be effective in making the VA a more timely payer and lessen the burden on community care providers when seeking payment from the VA for providing care to veterans. We also are pleased that the VA will provide reimbursement to community providers at rates set by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services.

We believe a strong partnership between America's hospitals and health systems and the VA is essential to ensure our nation's veterans receive the health care they need and deserve. Our member hospitals and health systems stand ready to work with the VA in implementing the new "Veterans Community Care Program" to care for veterans who have sacrificed for our country and deserve the best possible timely care in their communities.

If you have questions, please feel contact me or Robyn Bash, vice president, government relations and public policy operations, at rbash@aha.org or 202-626-2672.

Sincerely,

/s/

Thomas P. Nickels
Executive Vice President

