Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

November 6, 2026

The Honorable Joe Figueroa
Under Secretary for Health
Department of Veterans Affairs
Co-Chair, Health Executive Committee

The Honorable Keith Bass
Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs
Department of Defense
Co-Chair, Health Executive Committee

Dear Health Executive Committee Co-Chairs:

As members of the Maryland Congressional Delegation, we write to urge the Department of Veterans Affairs–Department of Defense Health Executive Committee to designate Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Bethesda, Maryland, as a demonstration location when implementing Section 731 of the Fiscal Year 2026 National Defense Authorization Act titled "Improvement of Availability of Care for Veterans from Facilities and Providers of the Department of Defense."

This provision directs the Departments to develop and implement action plans at military and VA medical facilities to strengthen resource sharing, increase the utilization of military medical facilities with excess capacity, improve veterans' access to care, and increase the volume of complex cases available for professional medical education. The law also calls for cross-credentialing health care providers, expediting installation access, integrating information technology and medical-record systems, designating local coordinators, and establishing performance and patient-safety measures.

Walter Reed is exceptionally positioned to advance these objectives. As the Nation's flagship joint military medical center, it brings together highly specialized clinical services, medical education, research, rehabilitation, and operational medicine. Its location in the National Capital Region will allow the hospital to serve a large population center of veterans across Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia, Pennsylvania, and the District of Columbia, providing the best site to launch this program and study its success. Walter Reed maintains strong partnerships with leading health and research institutions, including Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, University of Maryland Medical Center, the National Institutes of Health, the VA Maryland Health Care System, the Washington, D.C. VA Medical Center, and the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences. Together, its clinical capabilities, regional reach, and institutional partnerships make Walter Reed a strong location to demonstrate how coordination between the Departments can improve veterans' access to care while strengthening military medical readiness, clinical expertise, and professional education.

We therefore respectfully request that the Health Executive Committee:

- Provide the criteria being used to identify participating facilities and the anticipated implementation timeline;
- Conduct a joint assessment of Walter Reed's available capacity, clinical capabilities, and suitability for inclusion in an action plan under the FY2026 NDAA provision;
- Engage Walter Reed leadership and the directors of relevant VA medical centers in developing a facility-level implementation plan.
- Select Walter Reed as a demonstration location whose practices and lessons could inform future health care sharing agreements nationwide;

Veterans must also retain the freedom to choose where they receive care, consistent with the protections established by Congress.

Walter Reed possesses the medical expertise, infrastructure, and institutional partnerships necessary to serve as a national model for improved DoD-VA cooperation. We appreciate your consideration and look forward to working with you to expand veterans' access to high-quality care while strengthening the readiness of the military health system.

Sincerely,

Sarah Elfreth
Member of Congress

Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator

Angela D. Alsobrooks
United States Senator

John Fetterman
United States Senator

Steny H. Hoyer
Member of Congress

Andy Harris, M.D.
Member of Congress

Glenn F. Ivey
Member of Congress

Kweisi Mfume
Member of Congress

Johnny Olszewski, Jr.
Member of Congress

April McClain Delaney
Member of Congress

Jamie Raskin
Member of Congress