



February 10, 2021

The Honorable Mark Takano  
Chairman  
Committee on Veterans' Affairs  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mike Bost  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Veterans' Affairs  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Takano and Ranking Member Bost:

On behalf of the American College of Physicians (ACP), I want to express our strong support for health care services funding for our nation's veterans contained in the Committee on Veterans' Affairs' recommendations to the reconciliation directives included in the Concurrent Resolution on the Budget for Fiscal Year 2021, S. Con. Res. 5. ACP also supports the recommendation that prohibits cost sharing and copayments for veterans during the public health emergency (PHE) caused by COVID-19. These recommendations will help ensure that the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) is able to furnish vital health services to our veterans.

The American College of Physicians is the largest medical specialty organization and the second-largest physician membership society in the United States. ACP members include 163,000 internal medicine physicians (internists), related subspecialists, and medical students. Internal medicine physicians are specialists who apply scientific knowledge and clinical expertise to the diagnosis, treatment, and compassionate care of adults across the spectrum from health to complex illness. Internal medicine specialists treat many of the patients at greatest risk from COVID-19, including the elderly and patients with pre-existing conditions like diabetes, heart disease and asthma.

Many of ACP's physician members work and provide care within the VHA and are deeply committed to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) mission to provide high quality, comprehensive, and timely care to veterans in their time of need and throughout their lifetime. ACP recognizes the important health care services that the VHA provides to this nation's military veterans as well as its significant overall contribution as the nation's largest health care system, the largest provider of graduate medical education (GME), and a valuable contributor of medical and scientific research.

Since passage of the VA MISSION Act, ACP has strongly urged Congress to provide the VA with sufficient resources for the VA's vital healthcare mission for *all* of our nation's veterans, both for our veterans receiving care through traditional VHA services, as well as for those veterans needing access to care in the community through the Veterans Community Care Program

(VCCP). The VHA provides high-value and critically important health care services to veterans, and that infrastructure should be adequately funded and supported. There is also a demonstrated need to ensure funding for those veterans who legitimately need access to care in the community through the VCCP, without diverting precious funds from existing VHA medical services or other vital federal health care programs.


Accordingly, ACP is pleased that the Committee's budget reconciliation recommendations includes \$13.5 billion to the VA for medical care and health needs of our veterans. This funding will help the VHA meet the challenges of the unique health issues caused by the COVID PHE that impact veterans including: covering the increase in demand and expense for health services due to deferred care and the increased dependence on VHA health services by veterans due to economic hardship caused by the pandemic. This funding will also help sustain the momentum started by the CARES Act that expanded services and staffing for veterans' health services. ACP is also encouraged that up to \$4 billion of the proposed total funding will be available for the VCCP, alleviating some of the competition for resources between the VCCP and traditional VHA medical services.

Lastly, ACP fully supports the provision in the Committee's budget reconciliation recommendations that would make it possible for the VA to completely waive cost sharing and copayments for medical treatment incurred from April 6, 2020, to September 30, 2021. ACP commends the Committee for including \$2 billion for this purpose as well as for making it possible to reimburse veterans who have already paid these payments previously.

We look forward to continuing to provide the clinician perspective about VA health issues and funding matters, as appropriate. We sincerely hope these funding recommendations are included in the COVID-19 relief bill after Committee markup. If you have any questions or we can provide further assistance, please contact Jared Frost at [jfrost@acponline.org](mailto:jfrost@acponline.org) or (202) 261-4526.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jacqueline W. Fincher MD". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jacqueline W. Fincher, MD, MACP  
President