

September 10, 2024

The Honorable Scott Franklin
249 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Franklin:

On behalf of the more than 159,000 members of the American Dental Association (ADA), we write to thank you for introducing H.R. 9146, the *Ensuring Continuity in Veterans Health Act*. The ADA strongly supports improved access to dental and medical care for veterans through the Veterans Community Care Program, and believes it is critical that veterans have continuity of care through a dental home, whether it is a Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) dental clinic or medical center, or a private practice dentist.

We are also encouraged to see that the House Committee on the Veterans Affairs Subcommittee on Health will be holding a legislative hearing on your bill, and we hope for the Subcommittee's favorable consideration of this important legislation.

As you know, the Veterans Community Care Program allows veterans to receive care from a non-VA provider when at least one of the following conditions are met:

- The VA does not provide the necessary service at any VA health facility;
- The veteran resides in a state or territory that without a full-service VA health facility;
- The veteran lives in Alaska, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, or Wyoming;
- The veteran qualifies under the 40-mile distance requirement on June 6, 2018, and lives in a location that would still make them eligible under these requirements;
- The VA cannot provide the required care within VA standards for drive and wait times;
- The veteran and their VA provider agree that receiving care from an in-network community provider is in the veteran's best medical interest;
- The VA cannot provide the service needed in a way that meets its quality standards.

Allowing veterans to choose health care options outside of the VA when these conditions are met recognizes the challenges VA faces in providing high quality, timely, and convenient care to veterans across the country.

While the ADA strongly supports VA Dentistry and commends VA dentists for the exemplary care they provide, we also know that many veterans have benefited from receiving dental care outside of the VA and have found a dental home with non-VA dentists. It is essential that veterans have the option to remain in their dental homes, with continuity of care that will allow a dentist familiar the veteran's treatment history to make the best choices for that veteran's care.

The ADA commends you for your attention to the important issue of access to medical and dental care for veterans. We will continue to advocate for increased resources for VA Dentistry

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so that more veterans can access outstanding care through VA dentists¹ while also supporting the increased access to care veterans can choose to receive through the Veterans Community Care Program.

If you have any questions, please contact Chris Tampio at 202-789-5178 or at tampioc@ada.org.

Sincerely,

Linda J. Edgar, D.D.S., M.Ed.
President

Raymond A. Cohlma, D.D.S.
Executive Director

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¹ <https://adanews.ada.org/ada-news/2023/august/ada-asks-dentists-to-urge-federal-support-for-veterans-oral-health/#:~:text=The%20ADA%20is%20asking%20dentists,VET%20CARE%20Act%20of%202023.>