Federation of American Hospitals®

Charles N. Kahn III
President and CEO

July 9, 2014

Dear Conferee:

The Federation of American Hospitals (FAH), representing more than 1,000 investor-owned or managed community hospitals and health systems throughout the U.S., commends both the House and Senate for passing legislation that would reform and improve health care for America's servicemen and women. The FAH and its member hospitals, which include acute care, inpatient rehabilitation, psychiatric, long-term acute care, and cancer hospitals, in urban and rural America, stand ready to assist our nation's veterans by ensuring they have access to the timely and quality care that they so richly deserve, and which, at times, may be unavailable to them within the VA.

As the conferees work to iron out the differences between the two packages, the FAH wishes to express our support for a few key policies and suggest some modifications that would ensure America's veterans have the care they need when they need it.

To further strengthen access to necessary health care services outside the VA health system, it is vitally important that the legislation include an amendment originally authored by Senators Johanns (R-NE) and Warner (D-VA) to ensure prompt payment of claims, whether on a contracted or non-contracted basis. This bipartisan provision is strongly supported by a number of other Members of Congress in both the House and Senate, many of whom currently serve on the conference committee.

While we appreciate the "Sense of the Congress" contained in the Senate-passed legislation that urges the VA to follow the Prompt Payment Act (5 CFR 1315), we know all too well that the VA does not regularly follow the Prompt Payment Act and new legislation is necessary to ensure the agency meets its obligations. A statutory prompt payment provision—separate from the more broad-based Prompt Payment Act—that specifically governs reimbursement for veterans-patients at non-VA hospitals in Title 38, as exists within TRICARE and Medicare, would send an important signal of respect to both veterans and their caregivers.

In addition, as you finalize this legislation, the FAH encourages the conferees to take appropriate steps to ensure that existing Medicare policies, such as the "60 percent rule" for inpatient rehabilitation hospitals, do not inadvertently weaken the key goal of broadening veterans' access to the specialized care they need.

Thank you for your commitment to improving the health of our nation's veterans. The FAH appreciates the opportunity to comment and we look forward to working with you to pass meaningful legislation that reforms veterans' health care.

Sincerely,



750 9th Street, NW, Suite 600, Washington, DC 20001 • 202-624-1500 • FAX 202-737-6462 • www.fah.org