

# ALLOW VETERANS TO CHOOSE ASSISTED LIVING

## THE CHALLENGE

**Many Veterans do not have a choice in their long-term care.**

## THE SOLUTION

**Expanding Veterans' Options for Long Term Care Act**

**H.R. 1815** | Reps. Slotkin, Steil

**S. 495** | Sens. Tester, Moran, Murray, Rounds

### Issue Summary

- Our veteran population is aging rapidly, and their long-term care needs are growing. Roughly half of the 9 million veterans currently enrolled in veterans' health care programs are 65 or older. Over the next decade, the number of veterans over 75 is expected to approach 3 million.
- The number of veterans aged 85 or older receiving care from VA health services is expected to grow approximately 535 percent over the next 20 years. The VA predicts that approximately 80 percent of veterans will develop the need for long-term services.
- The VA is restricted from covering "room and board fees" at assisted living communities, which precludes veterans from utilizing this long-term care option. Many veterans eligible for nursing home care may not need skilled nursing or other institutional settings and may prefer a more home-like setting that promotes independence such as assisted living when appropriate.

### Legislative Solution

Bipartisan legislation would help more veterans access essential care and support through assisted living communities and provide an important alternative to skilled nursing facilities. It would create a three-year pilot program for eligible veterans to receive assisted living care paid for by the Department of Veterans Affairs.

A study by the VA finds that assisted living is less than half the cost of a skilled nursing facility (\$51,600 vs \$120,701), potentially saving the VA \$69,101 per veteran each year. Studies have shown that by attending to the social determinants of health, assisted living helps maintain the well-being of seniors and relieves the burden on public health programs by reducing hospitalization and social isolation.

*Argentum is joined by several leading seniors and veterans' organizations to proudly support this legislation, including: Disabled American Veterans, National Association of State Veterans Homes, Military Officers Association of America, Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, National Rural Health Association, Paralyzed Veterans of America, AARP, American Seniors Housing Association (ASHA), LeadingAge, and the National Center for Assisted Living (NCAL).*



**The Veteran population is rapidly aging, with those needing care increasing 535% in 20-years.**



**The VA is restricted in paying for assisted living care.**



**The VA could save nearly \$70,000 per year for every Veteran who chooses assisted living.**

## WHAT IS ASSISTED LIVING?

**Assisted living communities are seniors' homes—not skilled nursing facilities.** Assisted living is a home and community-based option for seniors who no longer choose to live alone and require assistance with activities of daily living such as bathing, eating, toileting, as well as personal and health care services. The residents who live in senior living communities average 85 years of age, with the majority having chronic health conditions.

Assisted living fosters a holistic approach to care by emphasizing not only physical well-being but also the social determinants of health, and supports seniors to lead a life of independence, happiness, and overall health.

