



March 17, 2026

The Honorable Jen Kiggins
Chair,
U.S. House Veterans' Affairs Oversight
and Investigations Subcommittee
364 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Delia Ramirez
Ranking Member
U.S. House Veterans' Affairs Oversight
and Investigations Subcommittee
364 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman Kiggins and Ranking Member Ramirez:

On behalf of Argentum, the leading national association representing senior living communities and the older adults and families they serve, I appreciate your holding the March 4, 2026 hearing, *Delivering for Veterans and Caregivers: Year One of the Dole Act*.

The members of Argentum operate senior living communities offering assisted living, independent living, continuing care, and memory care services where nearly two million seniors reside. These communities provide seniors with a choice and dignity in care in a residential setting, as opposed to institutional facilities. Our social model promotes abundant social and educational activities, restaurant-like nutritious meals, and strong resident engagement. Pets and family involvement are strongly encouraged.

Argentum strongly supported the enactment of the Senator Elizabeth Dole 21st Century Veterans Healthcare and Benefits Improvement Act. Most critically, under Section 127 of the legislation, there is a three-year pilot program to allow a limited number of veterans to choose assisted living for their long-term care needs instead of a veterans nursing home. The pilot program was initiated by the Expanding Veterans' Options for Long Term Care Act that Argentum championed with other veterans and long-term care advocates.

We are pleased that the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is making progress on implementing the Elizabeth Dole Act, and we are confident that the VA will be able to implement Section 127 of the law as quickly as possible so that veterans will begin to have a choice in their care. As you know, the VA is currently restricted from covering certain costs at assisted living communities, which prevents veterans from accessing this long-term care option. However, 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.

It is critical that the VA begin implementation because not only will it provide meaningful choice for veterans, but it may save significant dollars for veterans' health. In a 2021 report to Congress, the VA outlined federal savings that could be achieved if veterans were given the option of assisted living care. By utilizing assisted living for individuals who meet the relevant criteria at the time of admission, the VA would save \$69,101 per placement per year. Similarly, in 2023 the VA testified to Congress that, "to furnish assisted living services would be a helpful addition to VA's options for long-term care. VA has encountered difficulties within its current authorities in appropriately placing Veterans who may only require assisted living services because these Veterans do not qualify for nursing home care. Moreover, due to shifts in the industry to an assisted living model of care, particularly for patients with dementia, Alzheimer's,



or other memory deficits, VA's lack of authority to furnish assisted living services means they have no appropriate option."

Since the law's enactment last year, Argentum has met with senior leadership at the VA and the White House to press for quick implementation of Section 127. We also support any expansion of the program or similar efforts that would allow more veterans to have a choice in their care, while saving the VA critical funding.

Our veteran population is aging rapidly, and their long-term care needs are growing, with 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. According to the VA, roughly half of the 9 million veterans currently enrolled in veterans' health care programs are 65 or older and over the next decade, the number of veterans over 75 is expected to approach 3 million. Assisted living communities are ready to serve our nation's veterans, where already approximately two-in-five are veterans or their spouses.

We appreciate your efforts to advance the implementation of the Elizabeth Dole Act, and its pilot program for assisted living to provide access to a greater range of long-term care options, and to prepare to care for the ever-increasing population of aging veterans. We look forward to your continued engagement on these efforts. Please contact my office with any questions.

Sincerely,

James Balda
President & CEO
Argentum