

MEMORANDUM

A.5155 (Stern)/S.7129 (Martinez)

An act to amend the veterans' services law, in relation to veterans health care

LeadingAge New York and its not-for-profit, mission-driven members write to you today in support of A.5155 (Stern)/S.7129 (Martinez). This legislation would require the New York State Department of Veterans' Services, in consultation with the Department of Health, to undertake a study regarding veteran healthcare including specific health care issues related to women veterans and general access to quality health and mental health care for veterans and their families. The study would evaluate whether the needs of veterans and their families are being met by existing healthcare and veterans' programs and would provide recommendations for steps that could be taken to increase access to affordable, quality healthcare. LeadingAge New York supports the goals of this legislation, and recommends that the study include a review of access to critical long-term care services with respect to aging veterans who may have evolving or increasing health care needs.

LeadingAge New York represents the State's five veteran's homes offering skilled nursing services to individuals who have served our country. These five state-operated veteran's homes have a total of 1,220 certified beds. While many veterans are fortunate to receive care in one of New York's veteran's homes, there are many veterans who receive support and care via other nursing homes, assisted living, adult care facilities, home care agencies or adult day health care programs. While this legislation aims to enhance veterans' access to quality health care services, it does not address long-term care and aging specifically. Meanwhile, more than 50% of the veteran population is over the age of 65, making access to adequate long-term care services for aging veterans a critical factor in need of evaluation.

To ensure adequate access to care for our veterans, it is crucial that we understand the disproportionate health issues that affect them and the scope of the unmet need, including the needs of older veterans. This legislation would mandate a comprehensive study regarding the current conditions of veteran healthcare and report their findings to the legislature. Additionally, the study would explore the use of designated healthcare navigators, which would be a great resource to assist veterans with navigating the complexities of the long-term healthcare system and its benefits.

This legislation is a thoughtful initiative that could improve access to specialty care by enhancing healthcare programs and services to better suit the current needs of veterans and their families across the country.

For these reasons, LeadingAge NY supports A.5155 (Stern)/S.7129 (Martinez) and recommends that long-term care be included in the study of available veterans' healthcare services.

LeadingAge New York represents nearly 350 not-for-profit and public long-term care providers, including nursing homes, home care agencies, senior housing, retirement communities, assisted living, adult care facilities, adult day health care and managed long term care.

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