



**Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs
Office of the Secretary**

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GOVERNOR

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LT. GOVERNOR

ANTHONY C. WOODS
SECRETARY

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF House Bill 938
State-Owned Nursing Homes – Deficiencies, Citations, and Fines – Reporting Requirements
House Health and Government Operations Committee
February 22, 2024**

Thank you Chair Pena-Melnyk, Vice Chair Cullison, and members of the committee.

For the record, I am Tony Woods, Secretary of the Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs.

I am honored to appear before you today in support of HB 938 and respectfully ask the Committee for a favorable report.

As you know, since reports of poor conditions and neglect at Charlotte Hall were brought to my attention, my team has worked to overhaul the facility and give our veterans the care they deserve. We were honored to work in partnership with the legislature to pass legislation that requires contractors operating state-owned nursing homes, including Charlotte Hall, to provide notice of deficiencies and enforcement actions that are levied on the facility.

When I came before this committee last October, I spoke about the transition to the new contractor, PruittHealth, the reforms we've instituted, and how the work of transforming the facility has only just begun.

Since Pruitthealth took over operations, we've worked in lockstep to transform the culture, improve performance, and enhance our oversight model at Charlotte Hall. Today, we rely upon real-time dashboards that help us measure clinical quality measures, a six-person quality assurance team employed by the MDVA that conducts regular audits and spot checks, regular inspections from outside agencies (e.g., OHCQ, USDVA), and mandatory reporting of negative surveys thanks to the oversight bill enacted last year. That bill has been an important part of how we maintain transparency and we think we can go even further.

That is why we support HB 938 and are grateful to Senator Jack Bailey and Delegates Brian Crosby, Matt Morgan, and Todd Morgan for their leadership.

This bill holds my Department - not the management contractor - ultimately responsible for notifying stakeholders when a survey results in a deficiency or enforcement action within 15 days of a final survey finding.

This bill also expands the list of monitoring agencies to include the full range of organizations that play a role in ensuring we maintain high standards and deliver quality care to our residents. This includes the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, the Federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), the Maryland Department of Labor, and local health departments like the St. Mary's County Department of Health.

Finally, this bill clarifies reporting timelines for my Department to provide notice to stakeholders about final survey findings and negative enforcement actions.

These changes are necessary to maintain oversight at the home and ensure that operations at Charlotte Hall are transparent.

In closing, I want to acknowledge the guiding ethos of this administration: "leave no one behind." To me, this solemn pledge starts with our most vulnerable veterans, including our Charlotte Hall residents. There is no greater work that we can do as a Department and as an administration than to make sure we get this right for the veterans at Charlotte Hall.

I ask for a favorable report on HB 938 and am happy to take your questions.

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Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Anthony Woods". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'A' and 'W'.

Anthony C. Woods
Secretary