

STATEMENT BY

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BEFORE THE

SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON MILITARY CONSTRUCTION, VETERANS AFFAIRS, AND

RELATED AGENCIES

HEARING TO REVIEW THE VA ELECTRONIC HEALTH RECORD NETWORK (VISTA),

PROGRESS TOWARD INTEROPERABILITY WITH DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

ELECTRONIC HEALTH RECORD SYSTEM, AND PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

JULY 13, 2016

Chairman Kirk and Ranking Member Tester, thank you for the opportunity to address the Subcommittee on Military Construction and Veterans Affairs. I am honored to represent the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs as the Director of the DoD/VA Interagency Program Office (IPO).

As part of the current strategy to achieve the President's goal of electronic health record interoperability and modernization, the IPO was rechartered in 2013 to serve as the single point of accountability for identifying, monitoring, and approving the health data standards to create seamless, integration of health data between DoD, the VA, and private health care providers.

As you know, DoD and VA are two of our nation's largest healthcare systems, and share more health data than any two other major systems. Currently, the Departments share more than 1.5 million data elements daily, and more than 100,000 DoD and VA clinicians are able to view the real-time records of the more than 7 million patients who have received care from both Departments.

Health data interoperability is essential to improving the care delivered to our Service members, Veterans, and their beneficiaries. Working closely with the Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology (ONC) and Standards Development Organizations, the IPO helps identify, implement, and map the appropriate national standards associated with both Departments' electronic health record systems. These steps are vital and provide the building blocks necessary for the Departments to achieve health data interoperability as required by the Fiscal Year 2014 National Defense Authorization Act. In fact, earlier this year the Departments met this requirement and provided certification to Congress that their systems are interoperable with an integrated display of data.

The IPO is a collaborative entity, comprised of staff from both Departments with technical expertise in health data standards and information sharing. Assisting the Departments with their interoperability and modernization milestones, we serve as a central resource as DoD and VA develop, adopt, and update a technical framework that is clinically driven to align identified standards with approved use cases. To that end, the IPO monitors industry best practices and

provides technical guidance to facilitate data interchange between the Departments. We also serve as a conduit for the Departments' engagement with ONC and Standards Development Organizations to facilitate knowledge sharing on a national level; we have been integrated into ONC's planning for a national health IT ecosystem, and were key contributors in the development of ONC's Interoperability Roadmap that seeks to advance nationwide IT interoperability.

The IPO also plays an important role in monitoring the progress that DoD and VA continue to make in enhancing their interoperability efforts. Specifically, we have established a Health Data Interoperability Metrics Dashboard to identify Department-specific targets for transactional metrics and trends. We share this and much more information with Congress in our quarterly Data Sharing Reports and regular briefs with Committee staff. In addition to these efforts, last year, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) recommended that DoD and VA adopt outcome-oriented metrics to provide a basis for assessing and reporting on the progress of the Departments' interoperability efforts. We concurred with GAO's guidance and I am pleased to report that we have made substantial progress to address this recommendation. Specifically we have been working closely with ONC, DoD, VA, and other public and private partners to develop outcome-oriented metrics that not only measure the impact interoperability has on healthcare but specifically focus on the impact interoperability has on our patients and providers.

The field of health data is constantly evolving. For the Departments to maintain and enhance the interoperability of their electronic health record systems, we must continue our collaboration with ONC and industry partners to ensure that DoD and VA map their data to the latest national standards, and that ONC and the private sector can continue to learn from our experience.

The IPO is fully committed to assisting DoD and VA as they continue to enhance health data interoperability between their electronic health record systems and the private sector. Enabling health information exchange between EHR systems in DoD, VA, and the private sector will serve as the foundation for a patient-centric health care experience, seamless care transitions, and improved care for our Service members, their families, and our veterans. As IPO Director, I am happy to answer any questions you may have on the IPO and work of DoD and VA to identify

and adopt health data standards.

Again, thank you for this opportunity, and I look forward to your questions.