

**Chairman John Boozman Opening Statement
Committee on Appropriations Subcommittee on Military Construction, Veterans Affairs,
and Related Agencies**

Hearing to Review Health Care Modernization

February 5, 2019

(As prepared for delivery)

Good morning and thank you for coming today to discuss the Department of Veterans Affairs' electronic health record modernization effort. I would like to begin by recognizing today's panel – The Honorable James Byrne, VA's General Counsel performing the duties of the Deputy Secretary. He is accompanied by leadership in VA's Office of Electronic Health Record Modernization, including: Mr. John Windom, Executive Director; Dr. Laura Kroupa, Acting Chief Medical Officer; and Mr. John Short, Technology and Integration Officer. Welcome.

For years the Departments of Defense and VA struggled to share health information as service members transitioned to civilian life. Even within VA, there were more than 130 different versions of VISTA, the legacy electronic medical record.

Last May, VA kicked off a 10-year, \$16 billion effort to modernize VA's health IT system. This includes a \$10 billion contract with Cerner. By adopting the same EHR platform as DoD, VA argued that patient data would be seamlessly shared between DoD, VA and community providers, improving efficiency and transparency. Many of us on this committee have long advocated for a single, joint medical record that will follow a servicemember throughout their career in the military and into their time as a veteran. We are hopeful that this collaboration between VA, DOD, and Cerner can deliver on this vision.

Since last May, VA has undertaken efforts to address lessons learned from past EHR modernization initiatives. VA conducted detailed workflow analysis, technology assessments, change management workshops and outreach to key stakeholders.

However, challenges remain including interoperability with both legacy and community health systems, simultaneous implementation with other initiatives, and spending at a lower than expected rate. Perhaps the most important challenge facing VA is the need for its workforce to embrace what will be a wholesale change in the way they do business on a daily basis. We look forward to discussing these and other issues this morning.

With that, I yield to Ranking Member Schatz for his opening statement.

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