American Podiatric Medical Association
Written Comment of Brooke Bisbee, DPM, President
to the
U.S. House Committee on Veterans' Affairs
Opportunities with VHA Reorganization

February 11, 2026

Chairman Bost, Chairwoman Miller-Meeks, Ranking Member Takano, Ranking Member Brownley, and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit a written comment on the opportunities and challenges regarding the current reorganization of the management structure of the Veterans Health Administration (VHA).

The American Podiatric Medical Association (APMA) represents the vast majority of the more than 15,000 licensed podiatric physicians and surgeons, also known as doctors of podiatric medicine (DPMs), or podiatrists, in the United States. As experts in the treatment of lower-extremity conditions, podiatrists play a critical role in the VHA through interdisciplinary programs such as the Prevention of Amputation in Veterans Everywhere (PAVE) and the High-Risk Eye and Limb Preservation Program (HELPP), by helping to prevent amputations and preserve each veteran's mobility, independence, and quality of life. However, reorganization changes and staffing shortages in the U.S. VHA are threatening timely access to care for clinically complex patients with unique foot and ankle needs.

Long-term Impacts of Workforce Reductions

While APMA acknowledges there are opportunities to reduce inefficiencies in the VHA, we are concerned about the impacts of reorganization on veterans' access to foot and ankle care. The reductions last year left prolonged shortages of VHA support staff who play a critical role in aiding agency functions, including hiring healthcare providers. In 2025, the VA workforce was reduced by approximately 30,000.[1] In addition to these losses, a VA directive issued in December 2025 to each of the 18 VHA regional offices established strict staffing caps at local VA medical centers and clinics that would reduce healthcare positions by 10%.[2]

[1] Kornfield, Meryl, and Hannah Natanson . "VA Looks to Abruptly Eliminate Tens of Thousands of Health Care Jobs - The Washington Post." VA Plans to Abruptly Eliminate Tens of Thousands of Unfilled Health Care Jobs, The Washington Post , 13 Dec. 2025, www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2025/12/13/va-veterans-affairs-job-cuts-trump/.
[2] Kornfield, Meryl, and Hannah Natanson . "VA Looks to Abruptly Eliminate Tens of Thousands of Health Care Jobs - The Washington Post." VA Plans to Abruptly Eliminate Tens of Thousands of Unfilled Health Care Jobs, The Washington Post , 13 Dec. 2025, www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2025/12/13/va-veterans-affairs-job-cuts-trump/.

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The directive prevents facilities from filling critical holes in the health-care workforce, which stands in contrast with the VA's public statements that the reorganization initiative would not lead to significant changes in staffing levels.[3] APMA members in the VHA have also expressed significant concern about the ongoing staffing shortages and their impact on access to care. Without adequate support staff, physicians risk burnout. These challenges may drive young physicians to seek opportunities in the private sector, limiting the talent pipeline entering the VHA.

Addressing VHA Workforce Vacancies

In the past year, the VHA has struggled to maintain physician staffing across its health delivery network. A 2025 VA Office of Inspector General (OIG) report identified severe staffing shortages at the facility level, with a 50% increase in severe occupational shortages from FY 2024.[4] Furthermore, 94% of facilities in the report cited severe occupational shortages for Medical Officer occupations, which include podiatrists.[5] Without substantial support staff levels, the VHA will not have the capacity to recruit and hire physicians, including podiatrists, to fill these gaps.

The VHA has also faced long-standing physician recruitment challenges due to relocation barriers and competition with the private healthcare sector. According to the VA's November 2025 workforce report, job applications have fallen by 57% from 2024.[6] To reverse the current trend, APMA supports policies that expand workforce incentives, like continuing professional education (CPE) reimbursements in the VHA. The *VA CPE Modernization Act* (H.R. 657) would expand CPE reimbursement eligibility for VA podiatrists. According to APMA's recent Compensation Report, 83% of hospital-employed podiatrists receive a continuing education allowance, with an average allotment of over $3,500.[7] This bill would also help increase the annual CPE reimbursement level for allopathic and osteopathic physicians, which is currently capped at $1,000 per year and has remained unchanged since the benefit was first enacted in 1991. The legislation would expand access to veteran-centric training and education while strengthening incentives that bolster recruitment and retention in the VHA.

Conclusion

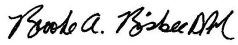
APMA recognizes the importance of modernizing VHA processes to improve care outcomes and guarantee efficient use of federal health funds. However, Congress must ensure there is proper agency

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[3] "VA Launches Veterans Health Administration Reorganization." VA News , 15 Dec. 2025, https://news.va.gov/.
[4] U.S. Department of Veterans' Affairs, Office of Inspector General, Office of Healthcare Inspections. OIG Determination of Veterans Health Administration's Severe Occupational Staffing Shortages Fiscal Year 2025.
[5] U.S. Department of Veterans' Affairs, Office of Inspector General, Office of Healthcare Inspections. OIG Determination of Veterans Health Administration's Severe Occupational Staffing Shortages Fiscal Year 2025.
[6] VA Workforce Dashboard, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 30 Nov. 2025, department.va.gov/employees/wp-content/uploads/sites/63/2025/12/VA-Workforce-Dashboard-Issue-31.pdf.
[7] *American Podiatric Medical Association*. *2025 Podiatry Compensation Report*, APMA & Marit Health, 2025, p. 36. Web. 16 Feb. 2026. https://www.nxtbook.com/nxtbooks/apma/podiatrycompensationreport_2025/index.php#/p/36.

infrastructure that supports comprehensive access to care for veterans. If we can be of assistance, please contact Ben Melano, Director of Government Affairs, at bmelano@apma.org.

Sincerely,



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President