



## THE ELECTRONIC HEALTH RECORD MODERNIZATION

### SUMMARY

- The Electronic Health Record Modernization (EHRM) rollout is currently in a pause which started in April of 2023. The pause was initiated after reports of veteran harm and deaths in Spokane, WA and elsewhere. A report by the VA Office of Inspector General (OIG) in summer of 2022 found that the EHRM Rollout had caused at least 148 incidents of veteran harm.
- During a House Oversight hearing on September 13th, acting program executive of the VA EHRM Office Dr. Neil Evans said that serious discussions for resuming the EHRM rollout will happen in summer 2024.
- VA has encountered many challenges throughout EHRM initial implementation including lost referrals, disappearing prescriptions, inadequate system uptime, and more. Additionally, when the system isn't up, providers have to rely on paper records, adding a substantial amount of time to various tasks.

### ISSUE #1 – Training of Staff

VA has experienced many difficulties in staff training as the EHRM rollout has progressed. Initial training modules were so unlike the end user software that it rendered much of the initial training useless. Other issues were with trainers, who were often temporary employees hired recently and only given a crash course on the software themselves before teaching it.

The VA has made good progress on this front. Training modules now look like the final end product, and trainers are increasingly VA employees who have had extensive experience with the system.

### ISSUE #2 – System Downtime

The EHRM system is required by government contracts to have a 99.7% or greater amount of system uptime, which is comparable to civilian hospitals. However, during the initial rollout phase the system was averaging between 87 and 97% uptime. This was one of the main reasons that the current pause was put on the rollout.

The VA and Oracle are currently working on this issue. As the rollout resumption is more than half a year away, it remains to be seen if progress is being made on this issue.

### CURRENT LEGISLATION

- ***S. 1125/H.R. 2809, the EHR Program RESET Act***
  - aims to restructure and enhance the EHRM program, while also mandating frequent reporting to Congress to increase oversight, accountability, and transparency by requiring the VA to develop clear metrics to guide "whether and how" the agency should deploy the EHR system

at other VA facilities. Additionally, it would require the VA and Oracle Cerner to fix the technology features related to patient safety and delivery issues, as outlined in the recent report from the VA's EHRM Sprint Project Team.

## **SUPPORTING RESOLUTION**

- No. 83: Virtual Lifetime Electronic Record.

### **WHAT CONGRESS CAN DO**

**Congress can pass the EHR improvement bills listed above, increasing oversight and accountability in the system. The VA needs to have a new electronic health record system, with the old system being more than 5 decades old and simply unable to meet the realities of the modern medical world.**

**However, the new system needs to be rolled out in a safe and efficient manner without veteran harm or undue burden on normal VA functioning. So far this has not happened. The current pause in the EHRM rollout should give Oracle, the VA, and Congress time to fix the issues that have popped up.**

