

Veterans' and Military Affairs Committee

JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No: HB-5415 / [Bill Status](#) / [Public Hearing Testimony](#)

AN ACT ESTABLISHING A VETERANS' HEALTH CARE OMBUDSMAN FOR THE COORDINATION AND OVERSIGHT OF STATE AND LOCAL RESOURCES IN NAVIGATING FEDERAL VETERANS' HEALTH CARE

Title: BENEFITS.

Vote Date: 3/10/2026

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 3/3/2026

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Veterans' and Military Affairs Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

The landscape of federal veterans' benefits is not easy for veterans to navigate, to the point where a number of state, local, and private non-profit and for-profit services exist to help connect veterans with their federal benefits. This bill would establish the Office of the Veterans' Health Care Ombudsman within the Office of Governmental Accountability to coordinate between different agents tasked with connecting veterans with benefits and the United States Department of Veterans Affairs, and to advocate for increased coordination between different agencies and organizations wherever possible.

SUBSTITUTE LANGUAGE (IF APPLICABLE):

In response to testimony from the Office of the Healthcare Advocate, the substitute language moves the Office of the Veterans' Health Care Ombudsman from the Office of the Governmental Accountability to the Office of the Healthcare Advocate.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Kathleen Holt, Healthcare Advocate, Office of the Healthcare Advocate: Ms. Holt expressed her support for this bill and her belief that the new Ombudsman position would be very helpful for veterans and their caregivers. She requested that the committee move the position from the Office of Governmental Accountability to OHA because the purpose of the Veterans' Healthcare Ombudsman much closer matches that of OHA, residing in OHA would

give the new ombudsman access to the office's resources regarding health care, and OHA would be able to assist the new ombudsman in bridging any gaps in health care. She lamented the difficulty that veterans have to face when accessing necessary health care and excitement about OHA's ability to tackle that hurdle. Lastly, she requested that the position be expanded to assist active and retired military personnel, as they also face unique challenges regarding their healthcare.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

[James Amaro, Chairman, Manchester Veterans Advisory Committee](#): Mr. Amaro expressed his support for this bill and noted that an ombudsman would do a lot to bridge the communication gap between local governments and the federal VA system.

Reported by: Sam Sims

Date: 3/18/26