

## Veterans' Cancer Care Coordinator Act of 2023

### **Background:**

The number of women veterans in VHA nearly tripled between FY00 and FY15, making women veterans the fastest growing cohort using VA healthcare services<sup>1</sup>. While the population of female veterans is still younger than that of male veterans, the median age is currently 51, an age at which the risk of cancer is significantly higher.<sup>2</sup> We will likely see an increase in older female veterans in the coming years, meaning that there may be an accompanying accelerated need for female cancer care.

Currently, many VA centers lack the ability to provide care for gynecological cancers such as cervical, ovarian, uterine, vaginal, and vulvar cancers. This means that veterans with these conditions are referred to community care, losing the benefits of integrated care for complex diseases like cancer that the VA health system typically offers.

### **Bill Summary:**

The *Veterans' Cancer Care Coordinator Act of 2023* would:

- Direct the Secretary of Veterans' Affairs to establish a pilot program for gynecological cancer care coordination. This program is based on the highly successful Maternal Care Coordination program (codified in law through the *Protecting Moms Who Serve Act*).
- Create the position of cancer care coordinator in the Women's Veteran Program. The coordinator would help the veteran access resources at the VA and in the community, as well as facilitating communication between her VHA providers and community providers.
- Require that the VA record and report on the success of the program to Congress.

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<sup>1</sup> Women's Health Services, Veterans Health Administration, Department of Veterans Affairs. (2018). *Sourcebook, women veterans in the Veterans Health Administration*.

<sup>2</sup> National Cancer Institute, National Institutes of Health, Department of Health and Human Services Age and Cancer Risk