

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-4315

February 5, 2026

The Honorable Douglas A. Collins
Secretary
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Secretary Collins:

I write to express serious concern regarding the 2026 U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Fee Schedule, which significantly reduces reimbursement rates for Home Health Aides (G0156) and Homemakers (S5130) in rural parts of Texas. The VA should be removing barriers, not adding additional ones for veterans trying to access the care they need and have earned by bravely serving our country.

As you know, the VA recently released the 2026 VA Fee Schedule which replaced the tiered locality-based structure in Texas with a single state-wide rate. This change slightly increased the reimbursement rate in urban and suburban areas but significantly cut rates in rural areas like the ones I represent. According to the Home Care Association of America, this will cause a 43 percent reduction in VA home health reimbursement rates for Home Health Aides and Homemakers.¹

The VA's decision to switch from a local tiered system which considered the specific conditions in each town and region to a one size fits all system, providing the same reimbursement rates to Home Health Aides everywhere in Texas, will have a particularly negative impact on veterans living in rural areas like South Texas. This change will make it even harder for my constituents who already struggle to get access to in-home care due to long travel times and staffing shortages. Without reimbursement rate increases, recruiting and retaining staff to operate these programs will become impossible.

In addition, there are reports that indicate spending on this program decreased also in part due to a drastic reduction of approved hours for Home Health Aides.² The reduction in approved hours along with recent changes to the VA Fee Schedule will further alter the lives of our veterans. Aides enable veterans to live with independence and dignity.

¹ Home Care Association of America. (2025, December 3). *VA Releases 2026 Fee Schedule: HCAOA Raises Concerns Over Deep Cuts*. <https://www.hcaoa.org/newsletters/va-releases-2026-fee-schedule-hcaoa-raises-concerns-over-deep-cuts>

² New B. & Salazar L. (2025, September 22). *North Texas veterans speak out as VA reduces their in-home care hours*. <https://www.cbsnews.com/texas/news/north-texas-veterans-speak-out-as-v-a-reduces-their-in-home-care-hours/>

While I understand the desire to simplify the VA Fee Schedule and reduce costs, there are at least 15,000 veterans in Texas who rely on in-home care provided through the VA's Home Health Aide program and will be negatively impacted by this change.³

For that reason, I ask that you reinstate the local tiered system to better consider the unique characteristics of the communities that our brave veterans reside in. I also ask that you reinstate the previous system of approving hours for Home Health Aides, which provide a necessary and life-changing service to our veterans to ensure that our elderly and disabled veterans receive the care they earned.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. I look forward to your prompt response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Vicente Gonzalez', enclosed in a thin black rectangular border.

Vicente Gonzalez
Member of Congress

³ New B. (2025, December 18). *Veterans Affairs home care changes in Texas: fewer hours for some veterans, rural caregiver pay to drop in January*. <https://www.cbsnews.com/texas/news/va-home-care-changes-texas-fewer-hours-rural-caregiver-pay-drop-january/>