

Statement for the Record
Senator Marco Rubio
U.S. Senate Veterans Affairs Committee
Hearing on Pending Legislation
May 22, 2019

Chairman Isakson and Ranking Member Tester, thank you for scheduling today's hearing, which includes the *Better Examiner Standards and Transparency for Veterans (BEST for Vets) Act*. I am proud to have worked with Senator Sinema on this bipartisan legislation, and I appreciate your consideration today.

To determine a veteran's eligibility for disability compensation, the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) often relies on information gathered as part of a medical disability examination (MDE). The VBA has increasingly relied on contractors to conduct a large portion of these MDEs in an effort to avoid delays in the disability claim process.

Last year, media reports revealed that contract physicians with revoked medical licenses have been performing MDEs on behalf of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). For example, in my home state of Florida, a physician was conducting MDEs on behalf of the VA despite the fact that her medical license had been revoked in two other states and was on probation in another due to a federal tax fraud conviction. A loophole in current law is allowing this to happen. This is unacceptable, and legislation is needed. The *BEST for Vets Act* would address this issue by ensuring only licensed health care providers are conducting medical disability examinations on behalf of the VA.

Health care providers who have had their medical licenses revoked have no business conducting MDEs that determine the benefits that our nation's heroes receive. Our veterans not only deserve the highest quality care, but they have earned it.

I would like to thank the Veteran Service Organizations supporting this legislation, including Paralyzed Veterans of America, Veterans of Foreign Wars, and Disabled American Veterans.

I appreciate the Committee's consideration of the *BEST for Vets Act* and look forward to working together to pass this important, bipartisan bill.