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TO: Honorable Detroit City Council

FROM: David D. Whitaker 
Legislative Policy Division Staff

DATE: September 16, 2020

RE: **RESOLUTION TO ENHANCE ENFORCEMENT AND OVERSIGHT
IN VETERANS HOME**

On July 29, 2020, the Honorable Council President Brenda Jones requested that the Legislative Policy Division draft a resolution urging the US Department of Veterans Affairs to enhance enforcement and oversight of Veterans Homes.

The draft resolution is attached for your review.

BY THE HONORABLE COUNCIL PRESIDENT BRENDA JONES
RESOLUTION TO ENHANCE ENFORCEMENT AND OVERSIGHT IN VETERANS HOMES

WHEREAS, The mission of the Detroit City Council is to promote the economic, cultural and physical welfare of Detroit's citizens through Charter-mandated legislative functions; and

WHEREAS, The most recent US Census Bureau's Five-year Estimated American Community Survey (ACS), approximates the veteran population in Wayne County at approximately 83,000, which represents approximately 13% of Michigan's veteran population; and

WHEREAS, Prior to COVID-19, the number of veterans seeking nursing home care was already increasing. As the Vietnam veterans population ages, the Veteran Administration (VA) has projected the use of veterans' nursing home care will grow 16% from 2017 to 2022; while veterans' use of nursing home care grew just 3% from 2012 through 2017; and

WHEREAS, A July 2019 review conducted by the Government Accountability Office (GAO), concluded that the VA has not adequately monitored its contractor's performance of State Veteran Home (SVH) inspections, in order to ensure that contractor staff effectively determine whether SVHs are meeting the required VA standards. This failure increases the risk that problems in SVHs could be overlooked, thereby placing the health of veterans at risk. The GAO also found that the VA is not transparent about its assessments of care quality at SVHs, given the fact that it does not publish information on the quality of SVHs on its website, even though there is no limit to the VA's authority to do so; and

WHEREAS, In May 2020, US Senator Elizabeth Warren (D-MA), US Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee ranking member Jon Tester (D-MT), and US Senators Edward J. Markey (D-MA.) and Bob Casey (D-PA) have requested that the GAO conduct an audit following a spike in veteran deaths and other reported care deficiencies at SVHs across the nation during the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic; and

WHEREAS, The Government Accountability Office (GAO) has offered four recommendations. The first, calls for the creation of a plan to monitor contractors' performance at community living centers and state veterans' homes. The second, recommends that the VA call for state veterans home inspectors to designate all "failures to meet quality standards" as "deficiencies" and not "recommendations," as is currently the practice. Third, a recommendation that the VA should develop guidelines for medical center staff for onsite inspections of community nursing homes. Lastly, a recommendation that the VA should maintain information about state-run veterans' homes on its website; **NOW THEREFORE BE IT**

RESOLVED, That given the importance of State Veterans Homes in VA's overall portfolio for providing institutional care to veterans and ongoing concerns about VA's role monitoring states' operation of these facilities, the Detroit City Council urges the GAO to conduct a more detailed examination of the VA's oversight of State Veterans Homes' quality of care and report on any progress in implementing the recommendations from GAO's July 2019 report; **BE IT FINALLY**

RESOLVED, That copies of this resolution be transmitted to the Michigan delegation of the US Congress, Senate and members of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee.