

**Opening Statement of
Gordon Denlinger,
Deputy Auditor General for Audits
Thursday June 17, 2021**

**Before the Senate and House Veterans' Affairs and
Emergency Preparedness Committees**

Regarding Pennsylvania's Veterans Centers

Good morning, Chairs Stefano, Muth, Boback and Sainato, and members of the Veteran's Affairs and Emergency Preparedness Committees. Thank you for the invitation to discuss the Department of the Auditor General's reports regarding Pennsylvania's Veterans Homes. My name is Gordon Denlinger and I serve as Deputy Auditor General to Timothy DeFoor. I am honored to provide testimony on his behalf.

Over the past five years, the Department of the Auditor General has released two reports regarding the status of the Commonwealth's veterans' homes. The first report, released in 2016, was an audit of the states veterans' homes which found concerns with certain processes used by the centers. Specifically, the Auditor General had concerns with the handling of grievances, admission procedures, and problems with the management of waiting lists.

The Department subsequently performed a special report, not an audit, in 2020, which was a follow up to the 2016 report. The focus of the 2020 report was on the Southeastern Veterans' Center's handling of the COVID-19 outbreak, and was developed using information from a Pennsylvania Department of Health inspection that was conducted last June, as well as telephone interviews with nurses, staff, and other affected individuals.

The special report highlighted that the DMVA **did** make significant changes to address the concerns of the 2016 audit. Despite those changes, however, the report did find that the Southeastern Veterans' Center failed to react quickly and adequately to manage the COVID-19 outbreak. At the time of our report, the Southeastern Veterans Center had reported at least 42 patient deaths from COVID-19 during a period that began in March of 2020 and ended in November of 2020.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. Auditor General DeFoor, like you, shares the concern for the welfare of those individuals who have served our great country.

I am now happy to answer any questions that you may have.