

Testimony of David Patch before the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs

LD 1111 "An Act To Update the Statutes Governing Membership of the Board of Trustees of the Maine Veterans Homes."

Good morning Senator Luchini, Representative Caiazzo and members of the Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs. I am David Patch, retired Commander, US Navy and multiple tour Vietnam Veteran. I am here today representing myself. While I am a member of the American Legion, the Military Officers Association of American, Maine Veterans Coordinating Committee, and the Mid-Coast Veterans Council, my testimony does not reflect the position of any of those organizations.

I would like to start my presentation by recognizing the current leadership of MVH CEO Kelley Kash, a retired USAF Colonial with a career history in the management of medical facilities. The Maine Veterans Homes are a gold standard in nursing homes across the country as has been demonstrated by their numerous awards. I would also commend the current leadership of the MVH Trustees, all veterans I understand.

When the LD 1111 was first presented, it was largely met with skepticism or complete disagreement. Perhaps the adage of "if it ain't broken, don't fix it" applies. Many in the veteran community frankly felt it was critically important that the leadership both within the trustees and the CEO needed to be veterans as veterans would be the most passionate to be sure the best quality care and facilities are provided our fellow veterans. At issue was, could you ensure the best possible qualifications for the job, Trustee or CEO, could be met and still be a veteran. Are there enough US veterans who could meet the high standards for the CEO and be willing to apply for the MVH position. Many felt there were. The concern would be that if there weren't qualified veterans, if you codify the requirement to be a veteran, you would sacrifice the highest qualification standards.

LD 1111 only requires 6 of the 11 Trustees be veterans. However, all of the State's Veteran Service Organizations will be requested to submit nominations for the position of Trustees. Other individuals may also be recommended for consideration. The Trustees then select the best qualified candidates and submits that list to the Governor. In other words, it is the Trustees who essentially select the Trustees to fill the vacancies and the CEO.

It is important to know that this legislation requires that 6 of the 11 trustees be veterans, the majority. And, the Trustees are the ones who hire the CEO and recommend the slate of candidates to fill the Trustee vacancies. Knowing that, the final decision on who to hire as the CEO rests with veterans.

So, while many of my veteran colleagues may disagree with my decision, I personally stand in support of LD1111 and I trust my fellow veterans and MVH Trustees to make the right CEO hiring decision.