

For the record, I am Catherine Kooyers from Kent County, Michigan. I advocate for veterans and was asked to speak today as the voice for a large group of veterans at the Home who are unable to be here due to disabilities or fear of retaliation for speaking out. As has been discussed with House members, they look forward to the day a panel of sincere legislators will meet with them at the Home to hear their words and work with them for positive change.

Thank you, Chairmen, Chairwoman, Committee members, legislators and staffers who made this joint hearing possible. Rep. Barrett, the veterans at the Home, especially many in wheelchairs who cannot be here today, asked me to deliver a strong THANK YOU to you. For those who do not know, last fall, Rep. Barrett made a surprise visit to the Home. Residents said that was a critical turning point that gave them hope. You not only visited with them, you listened and made each one feel important. But most significant, you then walked the talk by acting on what is in their best interests...because of that, we are here today.

And, that is the main message they want to send to all of you today: Home residents need every one of you to listen to them, to act to restore the basic, constitutional and civil rights that have been stolen from them by an incompetent and selectively deaf administration. Walk the talk as Rep. Barrett had the courage to do. Turn what they refer to as a prison back into a Home.

That said, the dilemma is how do we crunch years of visits, stories, issues and evidence into this short time before you. So, at this time, I submit for the record and consideration the following:

- Residents' list of their 30 goals and objectives
- The frequently discussed "21 Questions" prepared by the residents
- Relevant sections of my report to the OIG, President Obama and V.A. Secretary McDonald, such as allegations and history
- An addendum to that report covering the period between the day that report was submitted and today
- A list of people residents believe should be fired and why

Many evidentiary pieces are available to support allegations and statements, just let me know what you need.

That is how I planned to testify today. The plan was to stick with the main issues, offer solutions, answer the questions we were told you have for us then work with all of you to fix what is broken. No names, no shock waves, just pure intent to help our veterans.

I still believe Rep. Barrett had and has honorable intentions.

However, after being toyed with for two weeks by Rep. McBroom and his staff, with change after change and promise after promise, we were told there will be no testimony accepted from the public. What a slap in the face to everyone, especially the veterans from the Home who had a right to be present and speak.

It is Waterford crystal clear, Rep. McBroom's team invited us to meet in Lansing last week simply for damage control spin and has demonstrated no genuine interest in resolving issues at the Home. Talk without the walk.

What he did say, only after asking questions of us, is that he is a close friend with Jim Dunn...who is directly responsible for much of what happened at the Home and why the audit is scathing. It is our understanding he should have made that disclosure before questioning us. He stated last week he was unclear what to do re Jim Dunn and veterans involved in the audit. As I recall, he said something to the effect "do we fire him or let him take early retirement?" To me, that renders him unfit to Chair the Oversight and Ethics Committee. A man who is willing to even consider using his position to protect a friend, while that "friend" has caused so much damage to veterans and the community, in our eyes, is in the wrong office. He should have us advised he has a conflict of interest and removed himself from these hearings due to that conflict of interest.

Instead, we feel he put on a dog and pony show intended to create the false impression the State cares. Clearly, the Governor does not care because we have tried for almost two years to get his attention on these very issues before us today. Even Joe Froelich, who identified himself to us as Michigan Assistant Attorney General on June 21, 2014, arrogantly stated "I sit by Jim Dunn, I know EVERYTHING that happens

at that Home...and I know you are Catherine Kooyers, ..." and he went on to name each of us – even though I had never met him and we were not introduced. He then went on to assure us that Governor Snyder DOES get updates about the Homes and IS informed of the situation at the Home. Yet, here we are today with yet another scathing audit because not enough was done to fix this reprehensible mess.

Frankly, we suspected this was all just another dog and pony show when McBroom's staff released notice of the original hearing shortly before the mandated deadline. More so when that staffer said "we are only required to give 18 hours notice." They clearly did not want the public to have time to plan or prepare or speak or even be present.

Some suspected combining all these committees into one meeting would avoid a constant reporting of negative news in the media. I had hoped that was not the case but it clearly appears to be the case.

In the end, we recognize that some of you DO care about our veterans and your intents are honorable. For instance, you, Rep. Barret have done exactly what is needed to fix this mess. You listened to the veterans and acted in their best interests. Rep. Brinks, has worked with us during the journey and has advocated for Home residents. We do thank those of you who are here for the right reasons. The rest of you who see this as damage control, who "want this to be put in the past without media spectacle or noise," as McBroom stated, or think this is going away with token actions are very, very mistaken. We will be back but with stronger and more voices. That is a promise. A huge mistake was made wasting our time traveling to Lansing while we had honorable intent to fix this, then having us prepare testimony that will not be heard. Play games elsewhere, not with us or our veterans. We do not play games and will not stop until these issues are corrected. We have veterans dying and not getting proper care – those of you who are here for the wrong reasons should be ashamed of yourselves. These are classic examples of why Michigan gets an F and low rankings in too many reports. When you take politics out of the picture and focus mainly on "what is best for the veterans," it is very clear and easy to know what to do.

That said, we will be holding our own media conference in the near future after meeting with our attorney. We have a strong competent legal team looking into multiple legal actions against the State. Be advised today, at that time, we will be releasing the report we ourselves prepared after documenting for months what was happening at that Home before it was sent to the OIG in late 2014. It does contain names, dates, incidents and photos as well an addendum of the period between then and now.

Today, we are submitting this testimony for the record and giving copies to the media we invited here today.

Thank you for your time today.

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