



THE SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
WASHINGTON

May 26, 2017

The Honorable Charles E. Grassley
Chairman
Committee on the Judiciary
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Thank you for your April 14, 2017, letter to the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) regarding a request for information on "Access Summary Grids" and "Clinical and Future Care consult grids" for the Iowa City and Des Moines VA facilities, and the subsequent briefing that occurred on March 23, 2017.

VA appreciates your advocacy for our Nation's Veterans, and we share the same concerns. Providing Veterans with timely access to world class health care is a top priority of the Department. I am disheartened to hear that Committee staff members believe they received contradictory information to their request for access to information. I assure you that was not our intent and believe this was a case of misunderstanding between VA and Committee staff.

VA would appreciate the opportunity to again meet face-to-face to review and discuss any data that are of interest, and specific facilities' performance in those metrics. VA will spend whatever time is needed to ensure that all members of the Committee and staff understand every piece of information being presented and answer any questions they may have. If issues are identified, we can work together to ensure swift and appropriate action is taken to address those issues.

The Department's highest access priority has been to ensure that the urgent health care needs of Veterans are met in a timely manner. A part of this effort has been to ensure that all urgent consults are addressed in a suitable timeframe. Both Iowa City and Des Moines have done well with resolving urgent clinical consults.

The Department is committed to increasing transparency and has taken unprecedented steps to achieving that goal by launching a new Access and Quality Tool. Located online at accesstocare.gov, the tool provides Veterans with an easy-to-use, easy-to-understand way of accessing patient wait time and quality of care data. This tool not only provides Veterans with more information about VA services, it increases accountability and ensures VA is held to a higher standard.

Should you have further questions, please have a member of your staff contact Mr. Saki Ververis, Congressional Relations Officer, at (202) 461-7126 or by email at Saki.Ververis@va.gov.

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VA looks forward to continuing this open dialogue with Committee staff members as we work together in support of Veterans.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "David J. Shulkin, M.D." The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

David J. Shulkin, M.D.