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- ☐ 111 7TH AVENUE, SE, BOX 13
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- ☐ 307 FEDERAL BUILDING
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United States Senate

CHARLES E. GRASSLEY

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-1501

October 19, 2017

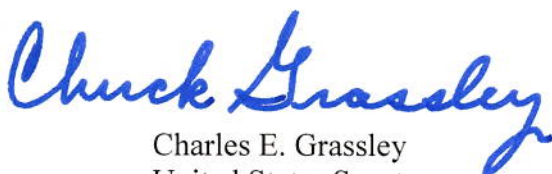
The Honorable David Shulkin
Secretary
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Washington, D.C. 20420

Dear Secretary Shulkin:

According to a report in the Omaha World-Herald, employees at the VA Nebraska-Western Iowa Healthcare System kept unauthorized waiting lists outside the VA patient tracking system for some mental health appointments. While we appreciate that the VA apparently took action to correct the situation after learning of it, the little that was disclosed publicly leaves some unanswered questions. For instance, the VA issued a statement maintaining that "Although no adverse patient outcomes occurred, some veterans waited longer for psychotherapy treatment." With mental health, receiving prompt care is crucial, and in severe cases can be a matter of life and death. It is important for veterans and taxpayers to know what role these unauthorized lists played and how they impacted access to care, what types and levels of employees were involved in the decision to establish the list and in operating the list, and what corrective actions and disciplinary measures were applied to make sure this does not happen again. Also, please describe the VA protocols for disciplinary action and how the taxpayers and the public should be kept informed in such instances. Please also describe how the unauthorized waiting lists came to light in this situation and whether the VA has systemic checks and balances to bring such unauthorized waiting lists to the forefront agency-wide.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. Please respond by October 31, 2017.

Sincerely,



Charles E. Grassley
United States Senator



Joni K. Ernst
United States Senator

Committee Assignments:

AGRICULTURE
BUDGET
FINANCE

CHAIRMAN,
JUDICIARY

CO-CHAIRMAN,
INTERNATIONAL NARCOTICS
CONTROL CAUCUS