

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 27, 2025

The Honorable Donald J. Trump
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Trump,

We are writing to express our deep concern about the negative impact of your recent executive actions on the mental health care provided to our nation's veterans. Despite vague assurances that certain Executive Orders will not impede veterans' access to care and benefits, it is clear the many actions taken by your Administration have already reduced the capacity of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to meet the mental health needs of our nation's heroes. Your attacks on public servants and federal assistance have cut critical personnel, postponed or curtailed critical resources such as suicide prevention training courses and the Veterans Crisis Line, and greatly heightened the risk factors most associated with veteran suicide, from decreased job and economic security to diminished access to care and support.

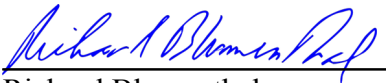
Veterans transitioning from service face numerous challenges reintegrating into civilian life, particularly in terms of accessing resources to address their mental health needs. The prevalence of post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, anxiety, and other mental health conditions among veterans makes it crucial they have access to comprehensive, timely mental health care. VA projects a 59 percent increase in inpatient and outpatient mental health care demand from FY 2022 to FY 2032, equivalent to an estimated 32 million encounters. Critical mental health staffing shortages have already been a significant concern, and psychologists and psychiatrists are among the hardest-hit positions. Your recent actions aiming to reduce the federal workforce – including instituting a federal hiring freeze, terminating probationary employees, urging employees to accept unauthorized and unfunded “deferred resignation” offers, and more – will exacerbate these challenges and further jeopardize the mental health services veterans desperately need. We were particularly outraged to learn that some of those terminated due to your executive actions were Veterans Crisis Line workers – critical VA employees who work tirelessly to fight veteran suicide and ensure 24/7 access to this resource for veterans in need. This action is despicable, and comes at a time when decreasing veteran suicide and increasing resources for veterans in crisis should be VA's top priority.

Furthermore, your dismissal of the VA Inspector General and attempts to freeze federal grant funding will compound the existing veteran suicide crisis. The removal of the VA Inspector General will undermine essential oversight of veterans' mental health care, risking a decrease in accountability within the VA system, where most veterans prefer to access mental health services. And while VA claims 44 of its financial assistance programs will remain uninterrupted in the face of a potential federal grant funding freeze, the future of funding for critical programs like the Department of Justice's Veterans Treatment Court Discretionary Grant

Program – which removes veterans from the regular criminal justice process to address issues such as post-traumatic stress and substance use – and the Department of Labor’s Homeless Veterans’ Reintegration Program – which empowers veterans experiencing or at risk of homelessness – have not been similarly protected by your Administration. Both of these programs provide essential support to veterans during vulnerable times when their mental health is often in crisis.

The mental health of our veterans should be a priority for your Administration, not an afterthought. We urge you to take immediate action to reverse these actions and to work toward policies that prioritize the care, support, and dignity of our veterans. We hope you will stand with our veterans and advocate for the mental health care they need and deserve.

Sincerely,



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



Charles E. Schumer
United States Senator



Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator



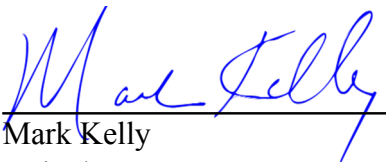
Tina Smith
United States Senator



Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator



Cory A. Booker
United States Senator



Mark Kelly
United States Senator




Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



Jeanne Shaheen
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Margaret Wood Hassan
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Alex Padilla
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