

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

May 6, 2019

The Honorable Richard A. Stone, M.D.
Executive in Charge
Veterans Health Administration
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Dr. Stone,

We are writing to request information on the Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) Health Eligibility Center (HEC) and the general status of VA's efforts to ensure an efficient and effective health care eligibility system for veterans seeking care through the VA. A welcoming, transparent, and responsive enrollment system is critical to enable veterans to gain access to the health care services they have earned.

In March of 2017, the Senate and House Committees on Veterans' Affairs wrote to VA regarding a number of concerns with VA's HEC and enrollment operations nationwide. These concerns included the need for additional outreach and steps to ensure veterans health care applications were kept open while they responded to VA's request for more information while their applications were reviewed.

After our letter, in September of 2017 the Government Accountability Office (GAO) released a report entitled "Opportunities Exist for Improving Implementation and Oversight of Enrollment Processes for Veterans." The report included four recommendations for VA to take to improve the enrollment process. In March of this year, GAO sent a letter to Secretary Wilkie regarding open GAO recommendations in high priority areas. These included recommendations related to health care enrollment, specifically to "develop a standard procedure that defines the roles and responsibilities of VA medical centers in resolving pending applications for the enrollment of veterans in VA health care benefits" and to "clearly define oversight roles and responsibilities to help ensure timely processing of enrollment applications for health care benefits." These are critical and foundational recommendations that need immediate resolution so that veterans experience a consistent and fair enrollment process.

In order to understand the VA's progress towards closing out these recommendations, please provide us information on current status and estimated time to complete GAO's recommended actions and any additional actions VA has taken to improve the enrollment system. In addition, to better understand the status of VA's enrollment system processes and efforts, please provide an excel file with monthly enrollment-related data for Fiscal Year (FY) 2018 and FY 2019 to date. This should include the full range of enrollment status data that VA collects and monitors such as, but not limited to, total enrollment records (disaggregated by type such as declined, means test, Purple Heart), applications pending a decision (disaggregated by type) and eligibility status.

Thank you for your attention to this request and we look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Jon Tester
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs



Mark Takano
Chairman
House Committee on Veterans' Affairs