

United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 8, 2020

President Donald J. Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We write to express our support for the addition of the Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to the Defense Production Act Committee (DPAC)¹. As the nation's largest integrated health care system and the largest federal agency charged with the delivery of health care, VA has an integral role to play in DPAC. VA participation will efficiently facilitate veteran care and allow the agency to leverage its unique resources in response to public health emergencies, including the current crisis caused by the COVID-19 outbreak. Through activation of Defense Production Act (DPA) authorities to combat the COVID-19 pandemic, DPAC has worked to improve health and economic outcomes across the country. Including the VA Secretary on DPAC will enhance the quality and timeliness of care for our nation's veterans, and given the VA's national footprint and proficiency in pharmaceutical distribution, it will create a more in-depth knowledge base for executing a strong response to national emergencies.

Global scarcity and elevated demand for personal protective equipment and other medical supplies have caused significant disruptions in the VA's primary health care mission to serve over 9 million veterans. Despite the pandemic, veterans continue to rely on the VA for routine and acute care, both at VA facilities and through the Community Care Network. The federal government must ensure that the VA can continue to provide this care, starting with providing the VA with the means to ensure its medical facilities are stocked, and staff is appropriately equipped.

In addition to its primary health care mission, Congress tasked the VA with the mission to provide care and services to those "responding to, involved in, or otherwise affected by" a disaster or emergency². This so-called "fourth mission" authorizes the VA to support front-line health care workers serving the general public, and further makes the VA relevant to the work of DPAC. During the national emergency caused by the COVID-19 outbreak, the VA has provided support to its state, local, and private partners by opening bed space in VA facilities to the general public and sharing staff and personal protective equipment with community facilities.

¹ 50 U.S.C. § 4567

² 38 U.S.C. § 1785

Beyond executing its missions, the VA would provide a unique perspective and set of resources to DPAC. The Secretary has access to an unparalleled workforce of front-line doctors, nurses, and administrators across the country who serve and understand the needs of their respective communities. This understanding can be critical in ensuring that the federal government targets its efforts and resources on the areas that are in the most need of support.

We thank you for your attention to this issue and your leadership throughout this national emergency.



Jerry Moran
Chairman
Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs



Jon Tester
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs