



THE SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
WASHINGTON

March 16, 2026

The Honorable Richard Blumenthal
Ranking Member
Committee on Veterans' Affairs
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Blumenthal:

I am responding to your January 5, 2026, letter to the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) regarding VA's reports mandated under section 5303 of the Deborah Sampson Act (title V of P.L. 116-315).

VA is committed to preventing sexual assault and harassment throughout the Department. All instances of sexual assault and sexual harassment are unacceptable. As you may know, the reporting increases you referenced took place during the Biden Administration, with whom you worked closely. It should also be noted that increased reporting from 2021 to 2024 is due in large part to the fact that as the coronavirus disease (COVID) waned, more employees and Veterans returned to VA facilities, leading to more complaints. In fact, these reported numbers in 2024 are similar to numbers reported in pre-COVID years.

Other factors in increased reporting include revisions in definitions and enhanced reporting requirements, rather than an actual rise in occurrence. Updated policies have broadened the scope of behaviors classified as reportable and strengthened mandatory reporting obligations. These changes have resulted in more comprehensive documentation and transparency, ensuring that all allegations are appropriately captured and addressed. This reflects VA's continued commitment to accountability and the highest standards of care for those we serve.

VA did not eliminate harassment prevention training. The Harassment Prevention and Accountability Training module is required for new hires and annually thereafter. VA temporarily suspended it in 2025 because it contained woke diversity, equity, and inclusion content. VA will begin providing a revised version of the training later this quarter of the current fiscal year.

While the Harassment Prevention and Accountability Training module was temporarily suspended, new hires still received harassment prevention training as they were onboarded, and existing employees received harassment prevention refreshers through multiple channels, including Facility Remediation Plan Training and Bystander Intervention Training. The Harassment Prevention and Accountability Training program remains in effect and is undergoing redesign to ensure it reflects current best practices

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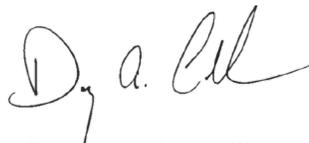
The Honorable Richard Blumenthal

and addresses emerging issues. These improvements include updated content to reflect current best practices, increased emphasis on accountability, and expanded resources for employees and supervisors. VA continues to prioritize prevention, education, and support initiatives to foster a safe and respectful environment for all employees and Veterans.

The Department is committed to preventing future instances of sexual assault and harassment through strengthened accountability, leadership engagement, and improved reporting and enforcement processes. VA is enhancing investigative processes for sexual assault cases and improving collaboration with external stakeholders to reduce inconclusive outcomes. VA's "no wrong door" approach is reinforced through structured processes, training, and compliance reviews to minimize delays and trauma for victims. Leadership accountability and culture change are central to VA's strategy for creating safe environments for Veterans and employees.

Thank you for your continued support of our mission.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D. A. Collins". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letter of each name being capitalized and prominent.

Douglas A. Collins

Cc: The Honorable Jerry Moran