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January 5, 2026

The Honorable Doug Collins
Secretary of Veterans Affairs
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Secretary Collins,

I write to express grave concern about the troubling trends in harassment and sexual assault incidents at Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) facilities, as documented in reports mandated under Section 5303 of the Deborah Sampson Act (Title V of Public Law 116-315). VA's own data reveals a crisis of safety that represents a fundamental failure to protect those who have served our nation, as well as the employees who have chosen to serve them.

VA has experienced a staggering increase in reports of sexual harassment and assault since the Department began reporting these metrics to Congress under the Deborah Sampson Act. In its most recent annual report, VA disclosed 1,541 cases of sexual harassment at its facilities. The number of sexual assault cases at Veterans Health Administration (VHA) facilities received by VA Police climbed from 323 to 472 between 2021 and 2024, while the number of sexual harassment cases reported to the Harassment Prevention Program (HPP) increased from 42 to 778. While some portion of these increases may be due to increased awareness of VA's reporting resources, such drastic increases are indicative of systemic failures across the Department to keep veterans and VA employees safe.

Though I appreciate the Department's creation of multiple reporting channels for instances of harassment and sexual assault – including VA Police, the Harassment Prevention Program, facility-level points of contact, MyVA411, and VSignals surveys – it seems there is a lack of clear coordination between these channels. I have heard from veterans this fragmentation can often force individuals to navigate multiple offices to file a single report, creating delays and requiring these individuals to retell their experiences. VA's "no wrong door" policy has become multiple doors leading nowhere.

I am also deeply concerned with VA's inactivation of the required Harassment Prevention & Accountability Training, putting the Department in clear violation of the Deborah Sampson Act and leaving both new and existing VA employees without information on how to report and address harassment and sexual assault. The Department has stated this training was inactivated due to Executive Order (EO) 14151, Ending Radical and Wasteful Government DEI Programs and Preferencing, and has demonstrated an alarming lack of urgency in reinstating this training. It is unacceptable that, while sexual harassment and assault reports at VA facilities continue to increase, the Department is unconcerned with providing its employees mandated sexual harassment prevention training.

In light of these concerning trends and actions, I request detailed, written responses to the following questions within 30 days:

- 1) What specific factors does VA attribute to the increase in sexual harassment reports since 2021? Has VA conducted a comprehensive root cause analysis?
- 2) What is VA's comprehensive strategy to reverse these trends in the coming years?
- 3) Please provide progress reports for the 17 VA facilities identified to complete remediation plans for Fiscal Year 2024 due to their high levels of substantiated sexual harassment or assault cases.
- 4) How many staff are dedicated to VHA's Assault and Harassment Prevention Office?
 - a) How has the number of staff onboard in this office changed since January 2025?
 - b) How many of these employees are performing Assault and Harassment Prevention Office work as their entire workload, without any collateral duties?
- 5) Who is currently leading VHA's Assault and Harassment Prevention Office?
- 6) Has the Harassment Prevention & Accountability Training been redeployed since it was inactivated?
 - a) If yes, how will VA be handling Harassment Prevention & Accountability Training for employees who were hired or due for annual training while this training was under redesign and inactive?
 - b) If yes, what changes were made between the previous version of the training and the new redeployed version?
- 7) Which individuals at the facility level are responsible for providing VA Central Office with the harassment and assault data compiled in VA's Section 5303 reports?
- 8) What accountability measures exist for facility leadership at facilities where incidents exceed national averages?
- 9) What actions does VA plan to take to address the high rate of sexual harassment cases (forty-two percent) determined by VA Police to be "inconclusive?"
- 10) Please detail the exact process for a sexual assault case being determined founded or unfounded.
- 11) How many sexual assault or harassment cases were transferred between reporting systems (VA Police, HPP, etc.) in Fiscal Year 2024?
- 12) How can VA's "no wrong door" approach to reporting be streamlined to ensure it does not lead to delays in response or individuals recounting traumatic experiences multiple times?

Veterans and VA employees deserve safe environments free from harassment and assault. The statistics most recently reported by VA reflect a population whose safety was violated while in the process of either seeking earned care and services, or while working on behalf of veterans. I encourage you to address these concerning trends with the attention and resources they deserve, to help make VA a safer place.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Richard Blumenthal", is written over a horizontal line.

Richard Blumenthal
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs