

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 24, 2025

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

Dear Secretary Collins:

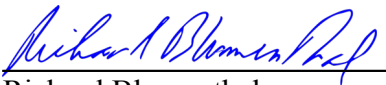
We write today to request information regarding recent changes to patient and staff policies governing medical facilities within the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). Having reviewed past and current versions of bylaws for multiple medical facilities within the Department, we have confirmed the Department made changes, in secret and without notification to the veterans you serve or to Congress, that could allow for discrimination in treating patients and hiring medical professionals.

Previous versions of the bylaws outlined specific prohibitions on discrimination against patients “on the basis of race, age, color, sex, religion, national origin, politics, marital status, or disability” (Article III, Section 3.03, paragraph 1). The new version prohibits discrimination only “on the basis of any legally protected status, including legally protected status such as race, color, religion, sex, or prior protected activity.” Additionally, whereas prior versions of bylaws prohibited medical staff hiring decisions based on, among other criteria, national origin, gender, lawful partisan political affiliation, marital status, disability, age, and membership or non-membership in a labor organization (Article III, Section 3.01, paragraph 3), all of these specific criteria have been cut from the new version of the text. The Department, under your leadership, cites only Executive Order (EO) 14168 “Defending Women from Gender Ideology Extremism and Restoring Biological Truth to the Federal Government” as reasoning for implementing these bylaw changes. This is a grossly overzealous interpretation of this EO and egregious misuse of power.

While many of the previously specified traits that have been removed from VA facilities’ bylaws potentially remain protected under existing statutes, the message VA is sending by stripping explicit references to these criteria is still deeply disturbing. Allowing, let alone encouraging, this ambiguity opens the door for widespread discrimination. These changes invite uncertainty as to whether a patient can be denied access to their earned health care or whether a provider is considered unfit to serve veterans based on anything other than their expertise and credentials. Even the appearance of allowing discrimination directly violates VA’s own mission: “To fulfill President Lincoln’s promise to care for those who have served in our nation’s military and for their families, caregivers, and survivors.”

These new guidelines are deeply dangerous and pernicious in practice and principle. It is your duty to answer to veterans, the public, and Congress as to why VA is sowing confusion and potentially putting veterans at risk and jeopardizing the Department's medical workforce, clinicians' licensure, and accreditation of its medical facilities nationwide. We insist you publish proper justification and clarification of these changes so as to leave no uncertainty as to the Department's protections for patients and employees against unlawful and unethical discrimination.

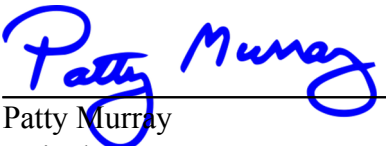
Sincerely,



Richard Blumenthal  
United States Senator



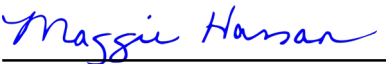
Charles E. Schumer  
United States Senator



Patty Murray  
United States Senator



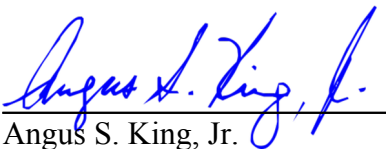
Bernard Sanders  
United States Senator



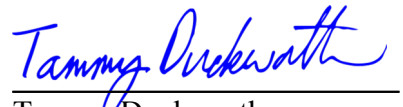
Margaret Wood Hassan  
United States Senator



Mazie K. Hirono  
United States Senator



Angus S. King, Jr.  
United States Senator



Tammy Duckworth  
United States Senator



Ruben Gallego  
United States Senator



Elissa Slotkin  
United States Senator



Richard J. Durbin  
United States Senator



Martin Heinrich  
United States Senator



Adam B. Schiff  
United States Senator



Jacky Rosen  
United States Senator



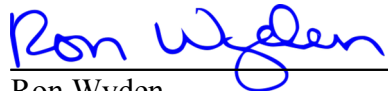
Jeanne Shaheen  
United States Senator




Michael F. Bennet  
United States Senator



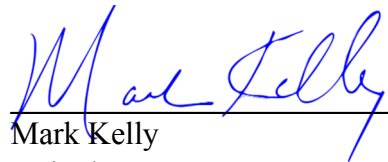
Alex Padilla  
United States Senator



Ron Wyden  
United States Senator



Catherine Cortez Masto  
United States Senator



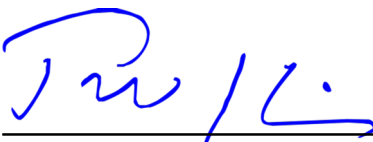
Mark Kelly  
United States Senator




Jeffrey A. Merkley  
United States Senator



Gary C. Peters  
United States Senator



Tim Kaine  
United States Senator



John Fetterman  
United States Senator



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Sheldon Whitehouse  
United States Senator



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Angela Alsobrooks  
United States Senator



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Mark R. Warner  
United States Senator