

Statement for the Record
Senate Veterans Affairs Committee
“VA MISSION Act: Assessing Progress Implementing Title I”
Wednesday, October 21, 2020
Senator Kyrsten Sinema

Thank you Chairman Moran and Ranking Member Tester for holding this hearing and to our witnesses for being here today; I'd like to recognize fellow Arizonan Dave McIntyre, CEO of TriWest, who made the trip to DC to appear before the committee.

Today, I sent a letter to Secretary Wilkie outlining my concerns about the rollout of the recent expansion of VA's Family Caregiver program. This expansion has the potential to assist many pre-9/11 veterans and their caregivers who have been waiting far too long for this support. Yet, on October 1st, the program went live with little notice to Congress, Veteran Service Organizations, or the very veterans and caregivers it is intended to help. Veterans were left struggling to understand whether they were eligible and how to access support.

In my letter, I ask the Secretary to reaffirm VA's commitment to customer service and take three critical steps to ensure the VA is doing everything it can to take the burden off the veteran/caregiver team. This includes launching a coordinate outreach plan with clear information as to who is eligible, proactively identifying veterans who might be eligible and reaching out to them to get them enrolled, and creating a system to assist those veterans and caregivers who are not eligible to ensure they are connected to other resources.

I appreciate the work that the Elizabeth Dole Foundation is doing to support caregivers and the critical contributions of the Elizabeth Dole Foundation fellows. My office has been fortunate to work very closely with the fellows in Arizona. I always appreciate their candor and willingness to share their experiences so that Congress can work to improve how the VA supports veterans the caregivers who support them.