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March 06, 2025

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

Dear Secretary Collins:

We write to express our shock and concern regarding reports that the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is pausing its comprehensive outreach program. Meeting veterans where they are and providing them seamless access to their care and benefits is a top priority of this Committee. VA's outreach program is central to those efforts, and a pause of any length will have immediate harmful consequences for veterans and their families.

On Wednesday, March 5, 2025, we received correspondence from Chicago community leaders that the Jesse Brown VA Medical Center noticed that it would be "temporarily pausing" its comprehensive outreach program effective Friday, March 7, 2025. Currently, the VA outreach program in Chicago assigns staff members to various community ward offices on a weekly basis. These staff members host support sessions to assist veterans in obtaining benefits such as securing healthcare, employment, disability pay, and other benefits. We are concerned that outreach efforts will be paused in other communities and that this will have a direct impact on veteran access to care and benefits nationwide.

In the email notification received by community leaders, VA reasoned that "immediate action was necessary to ensure that our Veterans receive the highest level of care in the areas where they need it most." It makes little sense how abruptly ceasing outreach efforts that communities and veterans rely on will ensure veterans receive the care they have earned when the purpose of those outreach efforts is to streamline access to health care and benefits. There is no reason VA cannot continue its comprehensive outreach program while also working to improve how it facilitates access. We fear that the decision to pause outreach, coupled with ongoing cuts to the VA workforce, will only make it harder, not easier, for veterans to receive their care and benefits from the VA.

To that end, we request answers to these questions and requests:

1. Please provide a detailed explanation of the reasoning for issuing the temporary pause of the comprehensive outreach program in Chicago.
2. Please provide a list of the offices and personnel involved in the review of this program's need for a pause, and who is charged with assessing the program before it can be restored for Chicago-area veterans.
3. As of January 20, 2025, have any employees involved in the comprehensive outreach program, through direct or collateral duties, at the Jesse Brown VA Medical Center been subject to the mass probationary terminations or Reductions in Force? If so, please list the former employees' occupation, job title, duty location, job duties, time in federal service, time in VA service, and date of termination. Please also include a count for the number of terminated and non-terminated employees within each of these offices that have had employees terminated.
4. Please provide a full and redacted list of personnel impacted in any geographic location by the pause in the VA outreach program, including occupation, job title, duty location, and job duties. As part of this request, please include information regarding whether the impacted personnel are being considered for Agency Reductions in Force and/or the Reorganization Plan.
5. Please provide full and unredacted copies of any correspondence, documents, or memoranda provided to any VA facility, including the Jesse Brown VA Medical Center, from any other VA office, including VA Central Office, directing the facility to pause its outreach program.
6. What is the anticipated length of the temporary pause? When will the comprehensive outreach program in Chicago be reinstated? When will other paused or cancelled outreach events and/or programs in other geographic areas be reinstated?
7. Please provide a detailed analysis of the effects this pause will have on access to care and benefits for veterans in the Chicago area.
8. What resources will be provided to veterans in the Chicago area and other areas identified as having outreach programs paused or cancelled in the interim of this temporary pause?
9. Please provide a detailed list, broken down by Veteran Integrated Service Network, VA Medical Center, partner facility name, state, county, city, and zip code of any ongoing, planned, or future pauses or cancellations of VA outreach events or programs.

10. Please provide a detailed description of any review VA is conducting or plans to conduct of its outreach programs, including the offices and personnel involved in that review and the programs and facilities subject to that review.
11. What is the role of the Veteran Experience Office in evaluating the VA comprehensive outreach program? Is the Veteran Experience Office involved in the evaluation of any other VA programs related to veteran access to care and benefits?
12. Is VA planning to alter its outreach program to focus on providing resources and information to veterans that encourage them to seek care in the community in lieu of VA direct care? If so, please describe a detailed description of the changes and the rationale for such changes.

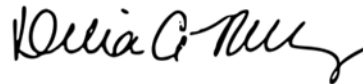
We ask that you respond to these questions no later than **March 21, 2025**. Additionally, we request that you provide a briefing to Committee staff no later than **March 19, 2025**. Should you have any questions about this request, you may contact Ms. Ally Cimino (Ally.Cimino@mail.house.gov) with the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations. Thank you for your review and response to these concerns.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Mark Takano
Ranking Member



Delia Ramirez
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Oversight & Investigations

Cc: The Honorable Mike Bost, Chairman
The Honorable Jen Kiggans, Chairwoman, Subcommittee on Oversight & Investigations