

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

June 18, 2025

The Honorable Douglas Collins
Secretary
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20420

Dear Mr. Secretary:

We write today to express our profound alarm and vehement opposition to the recent removal of certain nondiscrimination provisions from the medical staff bylaws at Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) medical facilities, as was first reported by *The Guardian* on June 16, 2025.¹ Specifically, VA medical facilities were directed to strip key provisions from their medical staff bylaws that prohibited providers from refusing veterans treatment on the basis of their marital status and political affiliation. Facilities were similarly directed to remove marital status, political affiliation, disability, and membership in a labor organization from the provisions of medical staff bylaws that bar discrimination in the appointment of medical staff.

These revisions are deeply disturbing, antithetical to VA's mission, and will seriously threaten the delivery of the safe, high-quality medical care that veterans have earned and deserve. Based on these revisions to medical staff bylaws, VA providers will now be able to refuse treatment to veterans whose political views they disagree with—including Democrats, Republicans, and members of any other political organization. They also will be able to deny treatment based on whether the veteran is married, whether they are part of a same-sex couple, or whether they are unmarried or widowed. These revisions will seriously undermine the ethical delivery of medical care at VA. It is imperative that VA treat veteran patients impartially and without bias.

It is our understanding that these revisions were directed by VA central office, despite The Joint Commission's accreditation standard MS.01.01.01, which requires organized medical staff have the right to self-governance, including amending medical staff bylaws through a voting process. We are concerned that the Department's unilateral directive to amend medical staff bylaws could jeopardize VA medical facilities' accreditation status. Last week, the American Medical Association adopted a resolution at its annual convention that urges VA to, "restore compliance with Joint Commission Standard MS.01.01.01 by requiring medical staff approval for any modifications to their bylaws."

¹Aaron Glantz, 'Extremely Disturbing and Unethical': New Rules Allow VA Doctors to Refuse to Treat Democrats, Unmarried Veterans, *The Guardian* (June 16, 2025).

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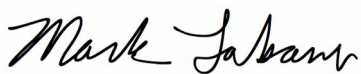
The Department's recent revisions to VA's medical staff bylaws are politicizing the delivery of care within the nation's largest integrated healthcare system, which serves more than 9 million enrolled veterans. Allowing clinicians to ask about political activity, denying care to certain categories of veterans based on marital status, and directing hiring based on ideology not only erodes the public's trust in VA but risks creating dangerous precedents in healthcare delivery, which could spread to other federal healthcare programs.

In light of these concerns, we demand that you immediately reverse these amendments to VA's medical staff bylaws and:

- restore provisions prohibiting VA providers from denying veterans' care on the basis of marital status and political affiliation;
- restore provisions that govern the appointment of medical staff members without discrimination on the basis of marital status, political ideology, and disability; and
- publicly affirm VA's commitment to guaranteeing every enrolled veteran receives timely, high-quality healthcare, regardless of their marital status and political beliefs.

We request a written response to this letter no later than June 27, 2025, detailing the actions you have taken to restore the nondiscrimination provisions of VA's medical staff bylaws.

Sincerely,



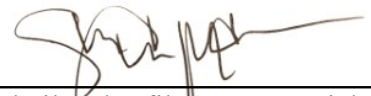
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Ranking Member
House Committee on
Veterans' Affairs



Julia Brownley
Ranking Member
House Veterans' Affairs
Subcommittee on Health



Chris Pappas
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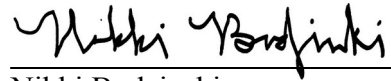


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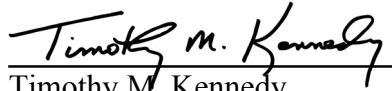
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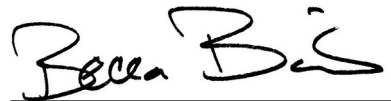
Maxine Dexter

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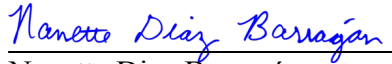
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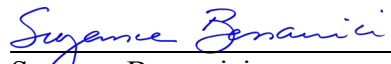
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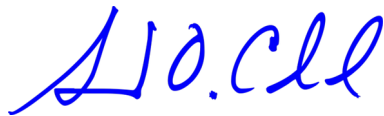
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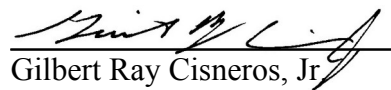
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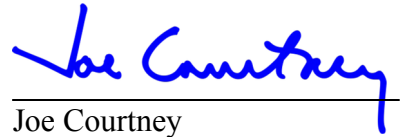


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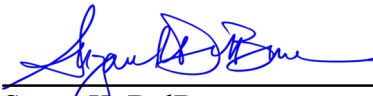
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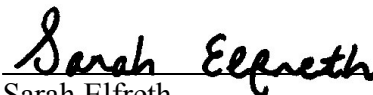
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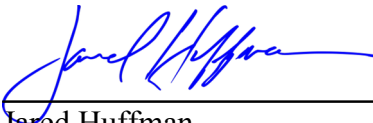
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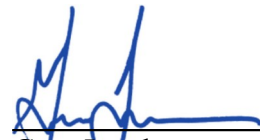
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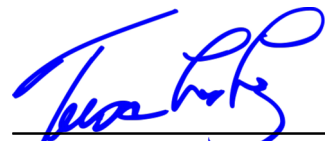
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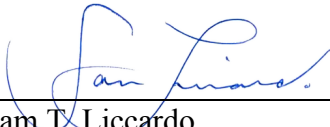
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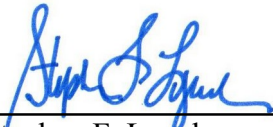
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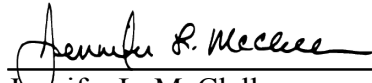
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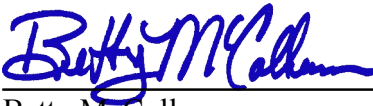
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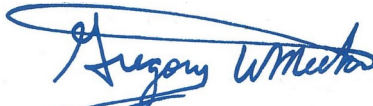
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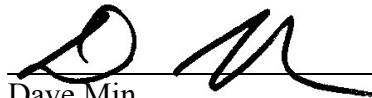
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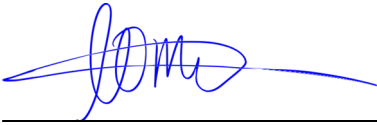
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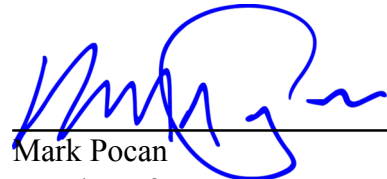
Ilhan Omar
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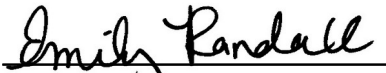
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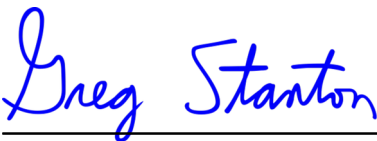
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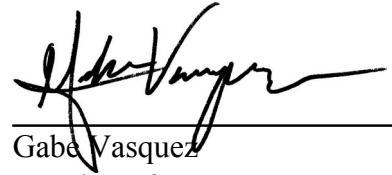
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