

## United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

120 HUYSHOPE AVENUE  
SUITE 401  
HARTFORD, CT 06106  
(860) 549-8463

<http://murphy.senate.gov>

October 2, 2018

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

Dear Mr. Secretary:

I write to request information regarding the Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) implementation of Section 1712I of Public Law No. 115-141, also known as the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2018. As you know, that law requires the VA to provide mental and behavioral health care to veterans with other-than-honorable (OTH) discharges, and to inform eligible individuals of the services available to them not later than 180 days after the law's enactment. That deadline for notification was September 18, 2018, but despite inquiries to your office, I have received no information regarding any efforts by the VA to notify the more than 500,000 veterans who are now eligible for care.

The lack of notification to eligible veterans was a critical failure of the VA's 2017 emergency program to provide care to OTH veterans; the VA must not make the same mistake twice. When the VA announced its emergency program in 2017 to provide up to 90 days of eligible coverage for OTH veterans, only 115 individuals took advantage of the program because the VA failed to properly notify, advertise, or inform any veteran that they were newly eligible to receive VA care. This experience is why I drafted language in the law requiring the VA to notify every veteran who has separated or will separate in the future with an OTH discharge. I am extremely troubled that it appears the VA has failed to follow the law and properly inform newly eligible veterans of the care available to them.

Our priority needs to be providing needed care to the veterans who have earned it, and I am gravely concerned that the Department's apparent failure to notify them in accordance with the law puts them at increased risk for mental and behavioral health problems. I implore you to release guidance on implementation of the law immediately, and to provide me information on your efforts. Thank you for your attention to this matter, and I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Christopher S. Murphy  
United States Senator