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February 14, 2025

Ginny Creasman
Executive Director
Charles S. Kettles VA Medical Center
2215 Fuller Rd
Ann Arbor, MI 48105

Chris Cauley
Executive Director
John D. Dingell VA Medical Center
4646 John R St.
Detroit, MI 48201

Dear Director Creasman and Director Cauley:

Thank you for your leadership in supporting the veterans of Southeast Michigan. This letter is regarding yesterday's announcement from the Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) to dismiss more than 1,000 employees.

As part of my annual "Valentines for Veterans" program, I visited John D. Dingell VA Medical Center in Detroit and the Charles S. Kettles VA Medical Center in Ann Arbor to deliver Valentine's Day cards to veterans and thank them for their service. Today, as I have not seen before, the anxiety, stress, and tension among employees was clear. Employees expressed their thoughts quietly, very afraid of what would happen if they said something publicly. Those who confided in me expressed great worry and fear. While they're concerned about the security of their own jobs, they're even more concerned about the impact a reduction of staff would have on the veterans they serve. They worry about the adverse effects it would have ranging from the daily operation of the medical centers to patient health and safety.

Employees are also deeply alarmed by the impacts of the administration's decisions on research. The ongoing federal hiring freeze, coupled with the VA's decision to dismiss employees, is resulting in terminations of VA researchers across the country. Not only will this significantly curtail our understanding of how to treat mental health and substance abuse, illnesses relating to toxic exposure, and other afflictions veterans face higher risks of developing, but also stunt our progress on prosthetics and other innovative devices and technologies. Researchers across the VA have been improving the lives of veterans for decades, and any staffing reduction will mean veterans no longer gain the benefits of the VA's research that is supposed to work on their behalf.

Furthermore, the VA is continuing to modernize its Electronic Healthcare Record (EHR) system with Oracle Health. Deploying this system nationwide will require significant staff and resources, and I am perplexed as to how the VA can deploy and sustain this system with fewer staff resources.

Supporting the men and women who have served our nation should be a number one priority, and the quiet fears I heard today are deeply disturbing. This decision will have far-reaching consequences that harm veteran services and benefits and negatively impact critical research. We should be *helping* the VA recruit and retain a qualified workforce—not dismantling it, discouraging it, or causing low morale. Equally troubling, there seems to be no clear transition plan on how this announcement will be implemented.

To ensure we fully understand the impacts of this decision across the VA and specifically in Southeast Michigan, could you please provide answers to the following questions:

1. How many employees at your medical centers are being affected by the VA's employee dismissal?
2. Have any research projects at your medical centers been halted or canceled due to recent orders or directives? If so, how many, and please provide a description of each project.
3. How many staff members at your medical centers have accepted the federal buyout package?
4. Our understanding is that some of the positions affected by the dismissal and federal buyout program were management positions at the VA. Their job responsibilities cannot go unfilled. What is your plan to replace these employees or ensure their job responsibilities are being distributed to others?
5. What is your timeline to resume deployment of the Oracle EHR? What funds are allocated for this deployment? How many staff members are working on this deployment, and do you require additional personnel to carry it out?

In addition, please regularly provide my office the following information on your medical facility:

1. Monthly call volume
2. Average call response time
3. Average wait time for veterans to access care
4. Current staffing levels
5. Current staffing needs

Thank you for your attention to this concerning matter. I remain committed to ensuring veterans across Southeast Michigan and the entire nation receive the benefits and care they deserve, and I will work with my colleagues to ensure their care and safety is not impacted by this administration's actions.

Sincerely,



Debbie Dingell
Member of Congress