

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

June 10, 2025

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

Dear Mr. Secretary:

Congratulations on your recent confirmation to serve as our nation's 12th Secretary of Veterans Affairs (VA). Many of us appreciated the opportunity to work with you during your tenure in the House of Representatives and look forward to continuing our collaboration as you lead the VA.

We write to express our concerns regarding the VA's continued effort to weaken the standards governing anesthesia care inside the VA health system. A proposed policy change under review in the VA National Standards of Practice would alter the team-based model of care for anesthesia services and move toward a nurse-only model without the clinical oversight of a physician. Such a change poses significant risks to Veteran patient safety and quality of care.¹ We strongly urge the VA to reconsider and reject any action that would undermine or diminish the high standards of anesthesia care our nation's Veterans deserve.

The VA's existing team-based model of care for administering anesthesia is identical to the model used when treating civilians in our nation's leading medical facilities, including the Mayo Clinic, Cleveland Clinic, and Johns Hopkins Hospitals. In fact, there is not a top-ranked civilian hospital that allows nurse-only anesthesia care in surgical or critical care settings. Surveys show that nine in 10 Veterans prefer to receive the same level of care within the VA that they would in any other hospital system.² Veterans overwhelmingly prefer physician-led care by a 12-1 margin, and over 71 percent believe that replacing physicians would negatively impact the quality of care received. Providing a standard of anesthesia care to Veterans that is lower than the standard provided to civilians who have never served in uniform is simply unacceptable.

To date, there is no clear rationale for the VA to diminish its current standards. Specifically, no independent patient safety research exists to support altering the VA's well-established policy as outlined in VA Directive 1123.³ On the contrary, existing data indicates that dismantling the proven physician-led, team-based model of care would result in increased risk of harm to Veterans, particularly to the recently enrolled PACT Act Veterans, a patient population with unique health care needs. PACT Act Veterans require the highest level of medical expertise available, which is best provided through a team-based model that incorporates both physician anesthesiologists and nurses working in tandem.

¹ VA National Standards of Practice. Listening Session. September 21, 2023, https://www.va.gov/STANDARDSOFPRACTICE/docs/NSP_ListeningSession5_Transcript_508.pdf

² *American Legion National Survey on Veterans' Care Preferences*. 18 Sept. 2023. Available [HERE](#).

³ VA National Anesthesia Program, 11SPEC - Specialty Care Services VHA Directive 1123(1) Available: [HERE](#)

For decades, the VA has upheld deference to state licensure and affirmed the team-based model of care for anesthesia services. Veteran patients have been assured care from highly trained medical professionals with the requisite education and experience to manage complex and high-risk cases. Removing physicians would dilute the quality-of-care Veterans currently receive and fails to meet our nation's moral and legal obligation to care for those who served. This is neither appropriate, safe, nor in the best interests of Veterans. Their care demands the safest, highest quality medical standards available, and the VA is currently well-staffed with physician anesthesiologists to provide this level of care.

Given the lack of justification for changing the VA's standards governing anesthesia care, we strongly urge you to reaffirm the current patient-centered policy, Directive 1123, and reject efforts to move away from the VA's mission of providing the highest quality care to Veterans.

Sincerely,



Gregory F. Murphy, M.D.
Member of Congress



David Scott
Member of Congress



Thomas R. Suozzi
Member of Congress



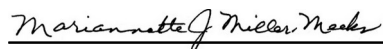
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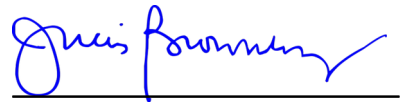
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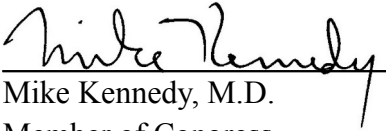
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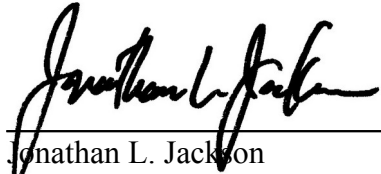
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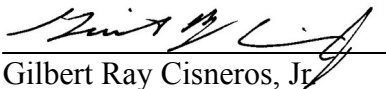
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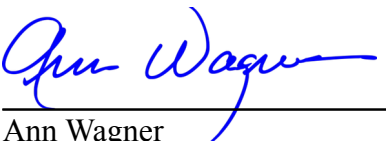
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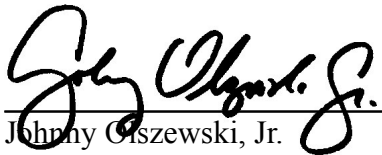
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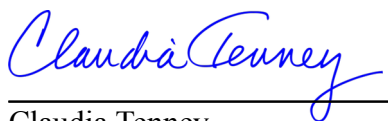
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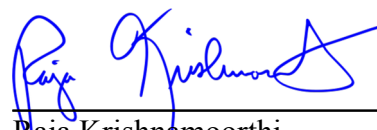
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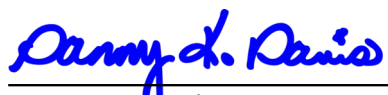
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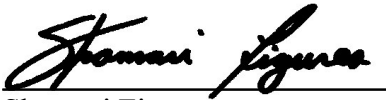
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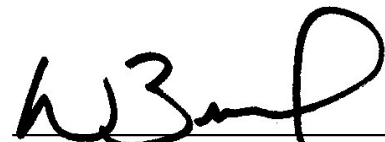
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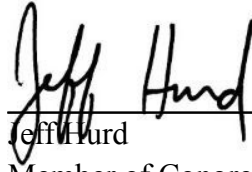
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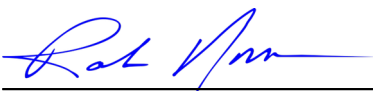
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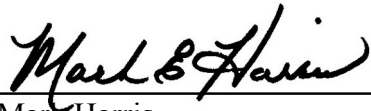
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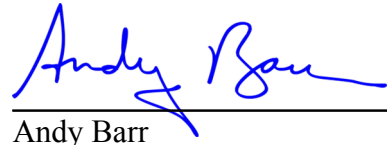
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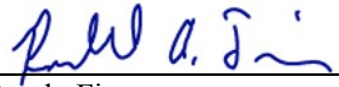
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