

September 4, 2018

The Honorable Richard Shelby, Chairman
Senate Appropriations Committee
Senate S-128, The Capitol
Washington D.C. 20510

The Honorable Rodney Frelinghuysen, Chairman
House Appropriations Committee
H-305, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Patrick Leahy, Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Committee
437 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nita Lowery, Ranking Member
House Appropriations Committee
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairmen Shelby and Frelinghuysen and Ranking Members Leahy and Lowey:

On behalf of the Nurses Organization of Veterans Affairs (NOVA), the Association of VA Psychologist Leaders (AVAPL), the Association of VA Social Workers (AVASW), and our members, we ask you to consider our thoughts as you begin final negotiations on *FY 2019 Appropriations for the Department of Veterans Affairs*.

As healthcare professionals who provide care to all Veterans in VA Facilities around the country, we urge you to properly fund VA medical services to empower VA to fill critical staffing shortages, restore full care capacity, modernize the electronic health record, continue its research portfolio, and provide adequate mental health services to include suicide prevention to Veterans at risk.

Therefore, we recommend the conferees adopt the Senate's position (\$78.3 billion) to properly fund the VA medical services account for FY 2019; and to agree to the House position to meet VA's \$1.2 billion funding request to modernize the Department's electronic health record.

We understand that funds for implementing the VA MISSION Act remains a point of discussion. To that end, we strongly urge conferees to ensure VA facilities, alongside appropriations provided to implement the VA MISSION Act, receive the funds needed to continue its **mission of delivering access to care and services to veterans who choose and rely on VA**. Otherwise, funds to pay for provisions of the VA MISSION Act will most certainly be drawn from VA allocations and undermine the financial viability of other critical VA services and programs.

We appreciate your hard work and continuing efforts to ensure that VA has the resources necessary to fulfill its most sacred mission, "To care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan."

We urge you to consider our suggestions and most importantly to pass a VA appropriations bill before September 30, 2018. VA must be given the funding it needs so that it can continue to provide all Veterans the care, and services they have earned and deserve.

Sincerely,

Nurses Organization of Veterans Affairs (NOVA) president@va.nurse.org

Association of VA Psychologist Leaders (AVAPL) president1@avapl.org

Association of VA Social Workers (AVASW) president@vasocialworkers.org