

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

August 5, 2025

The Honorable Douglas Collins
Secretary
Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Ave, NW
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Secretary Collins:

We write regarding the recent notification that funding to our states to plan and develop Suicide Mortality Review (SMR) Committees will not be renewed for Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 and regarding the potential that any unused FY2025 funds may be clawed back. You have repeatedly stated that veteran suicide and suicide prevention is a top priority for you personally and for the Department of Veterans' Affairs (VA), and we are concerned that cutting funding for the SMR projects in our states will make it harder to address veteran suicide.

Our states know the severe impacts of veteran suicide all too well. That is why they were awarded cooperative agreements to plan and develop SMR Committees to help address veteran suicide through a public health lens. SMR is grounded in evidence-based methods that are championed by the VA, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). This initiative prioritizes a review of veteran suicide deaths to identify systematic gaps and implement strategies to address suicide prevention for veterans in their communities.

These cooperative agreements were meant to help our states evaluate veteran suicide from a new perspective and try to determine if there are related factors influencing these deaths. These efforts take time, coordination, and a multi-disciplinary approach from a large number of community members. However, our states agreed to undertake these efforts because they believed that lives could be saved. The VA funded planning efforts, only to end funding after one year and before implementation could begin.

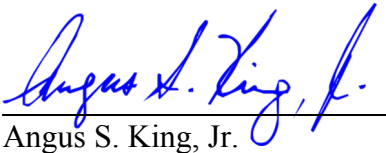
We encourage the VA to continue with year two of funding to give our states the opportunity to implement their plans, allowing them to demonstrate the value of SMR committees. The VA can't possibly be accurately evaluating the return on investment of this funding if they are only considering the planning phase and not allowing time for implementation. Additionally, in line with the President's February 18 directive to all agency heads ("Radical Transparency About Wasteful Spending"), we urge you to "make public...the complete details of every terminated

program, cancelled contract, terminated grant, or any other discontinued obligation” (emphasis added) of the VA funds used for these cooperative agreements. The public has a right to know why the VA is cutting services intended to save veterans’ lives and support veterans’ families.

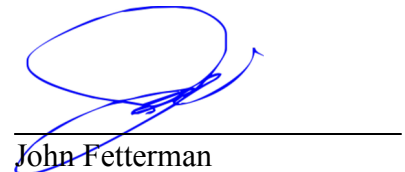
According to the 2024 National Veterans Suicide Prevention Annual Report, an average of 17.6 veterans die by suicide each day. We should be using every available tool to prevent these deaths. Without this funding from the VA, our states will not be able to continue their critical work to meet federal and state suicide prevention goals to help save lives.

We look forward to continuing to work together on this important issue and we thank you for your attention to this matter that greatly impacts veterans in our states.

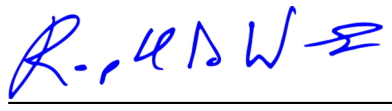
Sincerely,



Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senator



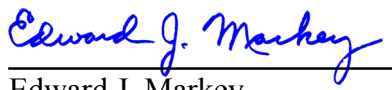
John Fetterman
United States Senator



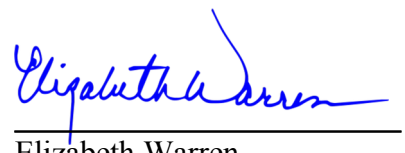
Raphael Warnock
United States Senator



Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator



Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator