

KYRSTEN SINEMA
ARIZONA

317 HART BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20510
(202) 224-4521

3333 E. CAMELBACK RD, SUITE 200
PHOENIX, AZ 85018
(602) 598-7327

20 E. OCHOA ST
TUCSON, AZ 85701
(520) 639-7080

<http://sinema.senate.gov>

United States Senate

COMMITTEES

BANKING, HOUSING, AND
URBAN AFFAIRS

COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND
TRANSPORTATION

HOMELAND SECURITY AND
GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

VETERANS' AFFAIRS

SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON AGING

September 8, 2021

The Honorable Denis McDonough
Secretary
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Ave, NW
Washington, D.C. 20420

Dear Secretary McDonough:

I am writing out of growing concern for the brave men and women who served in Afghanistan and have watched the U.S. withdrawal of military troops from the country. My office has increasingly heard from servicemembers and veterans as they process the recent news and their own, sometimes complicated, reactions to the withdrawal. The VA and the Veterans Crisis Line has also been experiencing an uptick in veterans reaching out for assistance. I am requesting more information on the VA's plan to connect these veterans to resources and ensure they are adequately resourced.

I appreciate the VA's outreach to the veterans community and sharing of mental health resources through email and social media. More must be done, however, to disseminate information about resources to veterans, and to ensure that each VA facility, including Community Based Outpatient Centers and Vet Centers, and the Veterans Crisis Line are prepared to support these veterans. I also understand the important role that community providers and other VA partners play in supporting veterans needing mental health support, and I am committed to ensuring that all of these resources are also being shared and can support veterans in need.

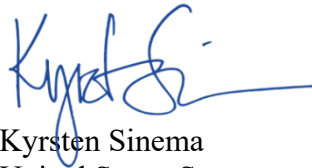
I would like to understand how the VA is anticipating and supporting the growing demand for mental health care needs. Specifically, I request answers to the following questions:

1. What plan has the VA developed to connect post-9/11 veterans, particularly those who served in Afghanistan, to VA resources and services both in the short and long term, including outreach to veterans already enrolled in VA services and those who are eligible but not enrolled? How has the VA integrated information about community providers and partners into this plan?
2. What steps are you taking to ensure that VA mental health services are appropriately resourced to ensure veterans seeking services receive timely assistance?

3. What steps has the VA taken to respond to increased call volume at the Veterans Crisis Line?
4. What steps are you taking to ensure community providers and partners are prepared to support the needs of veterans seeking support?
5. Finally, recognizing that many veterans work for the VA, what steps has the VA taken to ensure the health and wellbeing of its staff as they support veterans seeking care and resources?

It is critical that the VA proactively reach out and support veterans in need and their families – both now and in the weeks and months ahead. Thank you for your attention to these concerns and your commitment to making sure the VA is working for all veterans.

Sincerely,



Kyrsten Sinema
United States Senator