

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 12, 2018

The Honorable David J. Shulkin
Secretary of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue, North West
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Secretary Shulkin:

We are fed up. In our view, the Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) management of the Health Net contract has been a failure. While Health Net is the administrator of the Veterans Choice Program in our states, VA is ultimately accountable for Health Net's poor performance.

For three years we have worked with VA and Health Net to make the Veterans Choice Program more responsive to our home state providers who offer critical treatment and care to veterans when VA is unable to do so in a timely manner. We have regularly intervened on behalf of providers who have struggled to be paid in a timely manner after treating veterans. When dealing with Health Net, our providers have sat through lengthy call center hold times, had emails for assistance go unanswered and submitted lost paperwork over and over again. These providers, many of them small, have routinely carried high VA balances because payment to them has not been a priority. These frustrating and completely avoidable experiences have tarnished VA's reputation with those community providers who have stepped in to provide care to veterans. And more critically, they have contributed to a decreasing lack of trust by veterans and taxpayers in the VA's ability to provide quality and timely care to veterans.

Our home state providers deserve better than the miserable customer service provided to them by Health Net, which appears to be devoting even less attention to the Choice Program as its expiration nears. Moving forward, we expect VA to take immediate action to address our concerns so that the provider experience is improved. That means our providers need to have their calls answered without waiting on hold for hours, they need responses to their emailed requests for assistance and paperwork needs to be routed to the appropriate place. And most importantly, they need to be paid for the services they are providing to our veterans.

Taking these urgent and critical steps would help rebuild the public trust that has been damaged by Health Net. It would also help ensure that, once the Choice Program expires, VA is able to build the provider networks necessary to deliver community care in a much more timely and efficient manner. And if Health Net continues to underperform, we urge VA to immediately enforce penalties, including the potential discontinuation of any payments, until Health Net starts meeting all of its contractual obligations and most importantly, its responsibilities to America's veterans.

We look forward to your prompt response.

Sincerely,



Jon Tester



Mike Crapo



Richard Blumenthal



Sherrod Brown



Tammy Baldwin



Michael F. Bennet



Kirsten Gillibrand



Heidi Heitkamp



Amy Klobuchar



Bill Nelson



Debbie Stabenow