

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-0609

August 9, 2019

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

Dear Secretary Wilkie,

I write today to express concerns and request information regarding implementation of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) MISSION Act in Colorado.

I supported the passing of the MISSION Act and support greater choice for veterans' access to quality health and behavioral health care in a manner that makes sense for them. Since the beginning of the implementation of the Act on June 6, 2019, my office has been reaching out to veterans, veteran service organizations, and providers in Colorado to ensure they have the information they need to successfully participate in this new structure. These conversations have revealed some gaps in the public's access to information and understanding around the implementation of the MISSION Act, and more specifically, raised concerns about current inconsistencies within access to care standards established under the implementation.

In order to address these concerns, I request that you promptly provide the following:

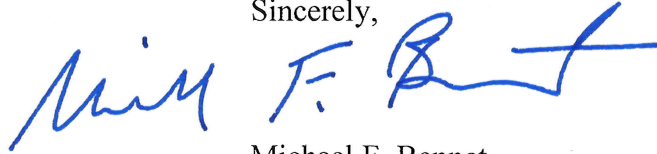
- An outline of the VA's MISSION Act outreach plan for rural areas across Colorado. In order to ensure all communities have a comprehensive understanding of the Act, I request the VA hold additional information sessions and town halls in the communities of Steamboat, Cortez, Trinidad, Summit, Fort Morgan, and Durango, Colorado.
- An overview of the processes in place to ensure delays in physician payments are minimized.
- An overview of the processes in place to ensure efficient authorizations, especially at urgent care facilities.
- An outline of the steps the VA has taken to ensure that TriWest has sufficient providers to address the diverse needs of veterans across the state. I am specifically concerned about access to providers in the Durango area community.
- An outline of the plan to address access to care for rural veterans who do not have access to urgent care or retail walk-in facilities and an overview of the outreach done to ensure veterans understand the distinction between "convenient care" and "urgent care benefits" under the MISSION Act.
- An updated comprehensive list of urgent care facilities in Colorado that have joined the TriWest network.
- An overview of the process by which the VA facility locator is updated to reflect the most accurate locations of urgent care providers in Colorado.

- A plan to ensure Community Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs) are able to meet the needs of veterans now eligible for care under the MISSION Act.

Colorado remains one of the top destinations for veterans and their families to live, and the VA MISSION Act has the potential to greatly improve the lives of those who have served and improve access to care earned. I hope the VA will continue to invest in this region to meet the needs of Rocky Mountain veterans.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Mike F. Bennet". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator