THE SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
WASHINGTON

SEP 10 2019

The Honorable Jared Golden
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Golden:

Thank you for your August 21, 2019, co-signed letter to the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) regarding the establishment of a permanent Residential Rehabilitation Treatment Unit at the VA Maine Healthcare System (HCS). I appreciate the opportunity to address your concerns.

The Veterans Health Administration's Office of Mental Health and Suicide Prevention (OMHSP) recognizes the need for a residential program in the Northern Market and agrees with the concerns you and your Congressional colleagues have raised. OMHSP is supportive of Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) 1 and the Togus VA Medical Center's (VAMC) plans for developing a Substance Use Disorder (SUD) program at the facility.

VA New England HCS and VA Maine HCS have been working on this issue and, with the assistance of OMHSP, have recently completed a clinical needs analysis, often called a market assessment, for the state of Maine. This market assessment examined current needs and used predictive analytics to help plan for the future treatment needs of Maine's Veterans. Consultations with Togus' Director of Mental Health, VISN 1's Chief Mental Health Officer, and the OMHSP Mental Health Residential Rehabilitation Treatment Programs Section have focused on the projected need for residential treatment in the Northern Market of VISN 1; the number of beds required to meet the expected need; and the specific types of services provided in an intensive SUD residential program. OMHSP, VA New England HCS, and Togus VAMC are working together to establish a timeline for standing up this important treatment program.

Should you have further questions, please have a member of your staff contact [redacted] or by email at [redacted] The cosigners of your letter have been sent similar responses.

Thank you for your continued support of our mission.

Sincerely,

Robert L. Wilkie

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