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## United States Senate

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January 25, 2017

The Honorable David J. Shulkin, M.D.  
Department of Veterans Affairs  
810 Vermont Avenue, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20420

Dear Dr. Shulkin:

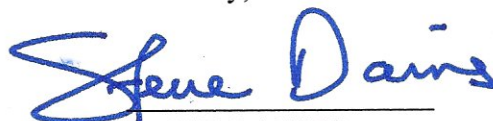
Congratulations on your recent nomination to be the next Secretary of Veterans Affairs. I would like to take this opportunity to raise a few issues that are impacting Montana veterans.

As you know, the Veterans Choice Program (VCP) was intended to extend care to thousands of veterans in small towns and rural areas across the country who do not have access to traditional VA facilities. Numerous providers and veterans have contacted me describing complications with the third party administrators—specifically Health Net—that connect veterans with providers in their local communities. Payment delays ranging from three to eight months, the inability to reach claims representatives for hours at a time, and elusive run-around on the most basic services were recurring themes. I was also dismayed to learn that payments for tens of thousands of dollars have been misrouted throughout the state, creating tax liability on small businesses and levying additional burdens on the providers who make the VCP possible. I recently reiterated to Health Net that their performance is unacceptable and have asked for regular updates on their progress. When confirmed, I ask that you to take action immediately to ensure that Montana Veterans are getting the healthcare they deserve.

As you may also be aware, there were several audits conducted in early-mid 2016 on facilities within the VA health care system, revealing persistent deficiencies in patient access and wait times at the Montana VA Medical Center. Last month, I had the opportunity to discuss these concerns with the new Director of the VA Health Care System in Montana, Dr. Kathy Berger. I am encouraged by her conviction to develop timely solutions and look forward to remaining in close communication with her to guarantee our veterans receive the care they need. I urge you to empower the proactive leaders within Department of Veterans Affairs who are working hard to make the system work for the men and women who have served our nation.

Thank you for your consideration, and I look forward to meeting with you soon to discuss these matters further. I also invite you to join me on an upcoming visit to the VA Medical Center in Fort Harrison to meet with Dr. Berger and her staff as they implement solutions to these ongoing challenges.

Sincerely,



STEVE DAINES  
United States Senator