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March 29, 2023

The Honorable Denis R. McDonough
 Secretary
 U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
 810 Vermont Avenue, NW
 Washington, DC 20420

Dear Mr. Secretary:

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Congress provided the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) \$36.7 billion in supplemental funding outside its annual appropriations. This included \$19.62 billion from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act and the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA), and \$17.08 billion from the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARP). Congress appropriated this additional funding to support the Department's COVID-19 response and give VA flexibility, outside of its permanent appropriations accounts, to ensure areas with the greatest need received funding.

From the start, I have been clear that this infusion of resources and enhanced flexibility must be matched with justification and transparency from the Department. To improve oversight of how these funds are spent, I authored the *VA Transparency and Trust Act*, P.L. 117-63. Enacted in November 2021, the law requires VA, the VA Office of Inspector General (OIG), and the Government Accountability Office (GAO) to submit regular reports on how VA uses and has used COVID-19 supplemental funds. So far, VA, OIG, and GAO have provided Congress with the required high-level reports on how COVID-19 funding is being spent. VA has indicated that substantially all the FFCRA and CARES funds were obligated by their expiration. In contrast, as of March 2023, \$12.51 billion, or 74 percent, of ARP funds has been obligated.

Congress gave VA the money you requested and significant new flexibility to spend it to make sure VA could meet its mission throughout the pandemic. However, during OIG's recent review of VA's spending of FFCRA, OIG was unable to verify the Department's obligations and expenditures matched the plans provided to Congress because it did not provide sufficient

supporting documentation.¹ That is why, now that the majority of the supplemental funding has been spent, and the President has announced that he plans to terminate the national emergency concerning the COVID-19 pandemic on May 11, 2023, it is appropriate for Congress to more closely examine how VA spent COVID-19 supplemental funding and determine whether those funds translated to protecting and improving the delivery of care and benefits to veterans.²

To that end, I ask that you provide all available accounting information to the Committee related to VA's obligations and expenditures for FFCRA, CARES, and ARP funds. Beyond the account-level obligation and expenditure data that has been reported, please provide subaccount, program, and function-level amounts, as well as information about transfers or reprogramming in this level of detail. Recognizing that the bulk of the remaining dollars from ARP fund Medical Care programs and activities, I also ask that you provide forward-looking spend plan information at the specific program level. Please provide this information by April 12, 2023, and after the information has been provided in writing, I ask that VA brief the Committee staff.

Sincerely,



MIKE BOST
Chairman

Cc: The Honorable Mark Takano, Ranking Member

¹ "Compliance with the VA Transparency & Trust Act of 2021 Semiannual Report: March 2023", VA OIG .

² 88 FR 9385: Continuation of the National Emergency Concerning the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Pandemic.