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July 21, 2016

The Honorable Linda A. Halliday
Deputy Inspector General
Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Ave NW
Washington D.C. 20420

Dear Deputy Inspector General Halliday:

We write this letter to you to once again request and gain information regarding one of the Veterans Affairs (VA) hospitals in the Second Congressional District, which is vital to the entire region of Northeast Kansas. We write with regard to the continued reports concerning a former physician's assistant, Mark Wisner, accused of committing sexual battery and other crimes against at least eight of his patients at the Dwight D. Eisenhower VA Medical Center in Leavenworth, KS. As you know, these crimes took place at the height of the VA scandal involving negligent care of our nation's veterans. We remain concerned that shameful behavior on the part of the entire agency may have cultivated an environment where these abuses could take place.

It has come to our attention that Mr. Wisner had a police record prior to his hire date at the Eisenhower VA. The charges on his record included exposing himself and other unwarranted, indecent acts. The most disturbing part of this new information is the fact that he still passed the initial background check and was not given any further background checks. The failure to thoroughly screen a VA employee put veterans at risk and turned their place of care and support into a hostile environment. This ordeal demonstrated a failure of leadership at the VA and runs counter to the VA's central mission of caring for those who have served their country.

Please respond specifically and in detail to the following questions:

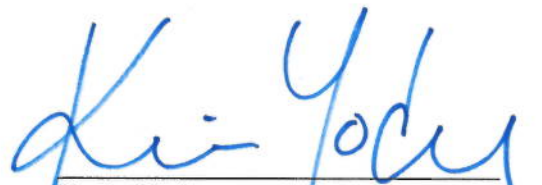
1. Was Mark Wisner's previous indecent exposure charge found by his initial background check? If not, why?
2. If the charge was uncovered by the initial background check, why did this not preclude Mr. Wisner from employment at the VA?
3. What determines whether a background check is failed, and what are the consequences for employment when crimes such as Mr. Wisner's prior charge are uncovered?
4. Why was Mr. Wisner not given subsequent checks at least annually to ensure his eligibility, from a legal standpoint, to stay employed at the VA and treat veterans?
5. Are subsequent background checks typically required for caregivers and employees with similar positions at the VA?
6. Was this situation caused by a failure of an individual in the VA's hiring apparatus, or rather a systemic shortcoming in the hiring procedures currently in place at the VA?
7. Has anyone within the VA been held accountable for failure to uncover Mr. Wisner's criminal history?

8. Has the VA considered implementing any changes to its hiring and background check systems in order to prevent a similar situation from happening again?
9. Please describe where in statute and/or regulation the VA has authority and procedure for background checks of medical professionals or other employees.

Mr. Wisner used his position to prey on vulnerable veterans. The breadth of his crimes and victims show that the VA must implement more and better mechanisms for keeping disturbed individuals like him away from veterans who come to the VA seeking help. Veterans demand and deserve only the best and most compassionate care. We owe them the best doctors and physician assistants and those at the VA who approve candidates must take every precaution and leave no stone unturned regarding a potential employee's background. We look forward to your prompt reply.

Sincerely,


Lynn Jenkins, CPA
Member of Congress


Kevin Yoder
Member of Congress