

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

April 19, 2024

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

Dear Secretary McDonough,

We write to you following concerning reports we have heard from veterans, veteran advocates, and prosthetic vendors concerning the quality of care at the Fayetteville VA Medical Center and its Prosthetics Services department.

There has been an apparent lack of attention to timely and empathetic care delivery for amputee veterans, overburdensome bureaucratic processes, and poor communication among staff and leadership that have created an environment where veterans' quality of life has been diminished, taking a toll on their personal relationships and mental health.

In addition to reports of a poor standard of quality care overall, there have also been reports that care coordination across clinical lines of operation is lacking to the point where prosthetic vendors who are trying to provide the best care they can are hamstrung by the VA because of poor communication and responsiveness, especially when it comes to timely payments for services rendered.

Last week, our staff was on a call with members of your Fayetteville VA Medical Center staff when a question was raised about a vendor not being paid on time and others who may have had overdue, outstanding invoices. Your staff stated that this was the first time they heard that there were any overdue outstanding debts VA owes to Prosthetics vendors in the Fayetteville catchment area. Please help us rectify what seems to be highly concerning information.

Care coordination and vendor relations should be a top priority for the VA. Veterans should not have to put their lives on hold for multiple months or years waiting for the VA to deliver them a well-functioning prosthetic. We hope to work with you to ensure that the Fayetteville VAMC is a facility where all veterans in the North Carolina coastal region can proudly seek healthcare.

Given the serious nature of these allegations involving prosthetics care and vendor relations, we ask you to quickly investigate the concerns raised at the beginning of the letter.

As part of the investigation, we request that you include the following:

1. What is the standard, clinically advisable timeframe for providing initial prosthetics devices to veterans post-amputation and is that timeframe communicated to the veteran at the onset of care?
  - a. How often does the prosthetics team communicate with the veteran if there are changes in the timeline?
  - b. How many staff are assigned these duties and what is each staff member's average monthly patient load?
2. What happens when a veteran reports issues with his protheses or prosthetics and what process and protocols does the VA have in place to address these issues?
  - a. How quickly does the VA require for an issue to be responded to with the veteran once reported and are the proscribed timelines and processes for resolution communicated to the veteran with timely updates?
3. How many staff are on the Prosthetics team and are there any vacancies?
4. We are told that in December 2023, one veteran had prosthetics care transferred within the same VISN to Richmond, which is one of seven regional centers of excellence in the VA's nationwide amputation system of care. Fayetteville retained all other care.
  - a. What is the criteria for such a transfer?
  - b. How many other veterans have had their care transferred in FY23?
  - c. In what ways is the care from Richmond more effective?
5. How does the Fayetteville VAMC communicate with veterans concerning delays in their prosthetics treatment? How does the Fayetteville leadership team track staff to veteran responsiveness recurrently?
6. If there are prolonged and/or unforeseen delays or interruptions in care delivery, what flexibilities does Fayetteville VAMC have to provide workable interim or alternative solutions for the Veteran?

7. What metrics do Fayetteville leadership team members use to monitor performance across the Prosthetics department and the Health Care System? What steps are taken to restore departments performing below set standards back to providing a high standard of care?
8. How many prosthetics vendors who service the Fayetteville VA catchment are waiting to be paid beyond the required contractual period for payment for prosthetic services and how long have each of these vendors been waiting to be paid as of April 12, 2024?

Sincerely,



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Thom Tillis  
United States Senator



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David Rouzer  
Member of Congress