

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

March 21, 2024

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

Dear Secretary McDonough:

We write to you with deep concern and sorrow regarding the systemic failures at the West Palm Beach VA Medical Center and the subsequent tragic incident on March 16, 2024. The discovery of a deceased patient in the acute mental health unit, coupled with the charge of first-degree murder against another patient within the facility, is a stark reminder of the urgent need for accountability and reform within our VA system.¹

It is profoundly troubling that such a tragic event could occur within the walls of a facility meant to provide care and support to our nation's veterans. The loss of life under these circumstances is unacceptable and demands a swift and thorough investigation. We urge the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs to provide all necessary resources to the Office of Inspector General's (OIG) ongoing investigation into this matter and to ensure that justice is served for the victim and their family.

It is clear that there are significant issues resulting from the mismanagement of the West Palm Beach VA Medical Center. We have previously written to you regarding our concern with the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) rating for this facility, as well as the Bay Pines facility, of one out of five stars, the lowest possible.² The report showed that only 28% of veterans received appropriate care for severe sepsis compared to a national average of 60% of patients, that 86% of veterans received proper follow up to colonoscopies compared to the national average of 92%, that central-line-associated infections in the ICU were three times the national average and the readmission rate for chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) patients was 26% higher than the national average. To be one of only nine one-star VA facilities in the country reflects a systemic failure in management and oversight within this facility. Our Florida veterans, who have bravely put their lives on the line in service to our nation, deserve so much better than inadequate care and failing facilities.

¹ <https://www.palmbeachpost.com/news/>

² <https://www.medicare.gov/care-compare/details/hospital/10065F?city=West%20Palm%20Beach&state=FL&zipcode=>

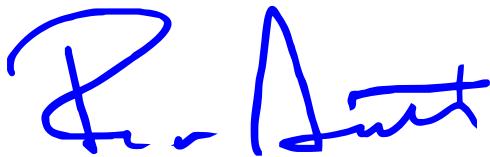
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We urge you to take immediate action to hold Mr. Price and the management team at the West Palm Beach VA Medical Center accountable. It is abundantly clear that changes in leadership are necessary to address the pervasive issues plaguing the facility and to ensure that such deeply tragic incidents do not recur. Furthermore, we request regular updates on the progress of the investigation into this incident, the steps being taken to remediate the CMS rating, as well as any measures being implemented to enhance security and protect the welfare of patients and staff at the West Palm Beach VA Medical Center.

The safety, well-being and dignity of our nation's veterans must always be our highest priority. We owe it to them to provide the highest quality of care and support possible. Anything less is a betrayal of the trust they have placed in us.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter.

Sincerely,



Rick Scott
United States Senator



Marco Rubio
United States Senator



Representative Brian Mast
Member of Congress