

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

June 18, 2020

Mr. David Isaacks
Director
Kansas City VA Medical Center
4801 Linwood Blvd
Kansas City, MO 64128

Dear Mr. Isaacks,

Today, we write on behalf of several employees at the Kansas City Veterans Administration (KCVA) Medical Center. Over the past several months, employees have raised concerns that have formed a pattern we simply cannot ignore. Our offices have brought some to your attention over the last few months through formal inquiries, but many more employees have been affected and it's on behalf of all of them and the veterans they serve that we write you today.

Most pressing is a Juneteenth event scheduled to take place on the campus. According to reports to our offices, African American employees were asked by management to take part in a living museum in which they portray historic figures, including former slaves. In addition, various people were solicited to perform, particularly "rappers." It was also noted that an Associate Director on a staff conference call discussed ordering fried chicken and watermelon as catering for the event. If a safe working environment existed, this could have been a moment of learning and growing, but staff confronted with these racist facets of the event fear retribution and even job loss by coming forward to share their concerns.

Staff have conveyed that they face retaliation when they report wrongdoing within the facility, rather than the wrongdoer being held accountable. Many equal employment opportunity (EEO) complaints have been filed in regard to countless discriminatory acts at all levels of the KCVA. It is our understanding that in response to EEO complaints, positions were created and posted on USAJOBS solely for settlement purposes. Furthermore, of those who accepted the new settlement positions, some have since been fired and some who refused the settlement offers have been targeted for further harassment and discrimination.

It has also been conveyed that the discrimination and racist acts haven't solely been carried out toward staff but also veterans seeking care. Veterans are in a vulnerable position as they can only get care from one source in their communities. They have to put their trust in the VA and hope they are getting the best care possible. We have a responsibility to provide them with the highest quality of care, free of discrimination.

Our colleague, United States Senator Jerry Moran, raised concerns directly with Secretary Robert Wilkie in March 2020 regarding the widespread discrimination over the last 10 years and requested documentation on the complaints and how they were handled. We would also request such documentation be shared with our offices within 10 business days of the date of this letter. In

addition, we would also like information on applicant scoring protocols and the altering of scores to eliminate particular minority candidates from advancing.

We respectfully request your prompt action to ensure that discriminatory practices are eliminated and the environment in which people's job are used as leverage particularly during an economic hardship is halted.

Warmest regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Emanuel Cleaver, II". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

Emanuel Cleaver, II
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Sharice L. Davids". The signature is stylized and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

Sharice L. Davids
Member of Congress