

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 14, 2014

The Honorable Eric Shinseki
Secretary of Veterans Affairs
Department of Veterans Affairs
801 Vermont Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Secretary Shinseki:

Thank you for your response of October 11, 2013, in which you outlined the rationale for Veterans Health Administration's (VHA's) proposal to eliminate team-based care for surgical anesthesia care within the Veterans Affairs (VA) health care system.

We were encouraged to learn that the VA is aware of the differing views of this proposal, and that the VHA will engage in a rule making process which will give all interested parties the opportunity to comment before any final decisions are made. We would hope the VA Chiefs of Anesthesiology, sixty-seven of whom recently invoked "Stop the Line" regarding this proposal, would have an opportunity to have their views considered during the concurrence process. As front-line providers of health care services, the VA will benefit from the perspectives of these clinical leaders. Indeed, we believe it is important to include the viewpoint of these and other impacted stakeholders in this policy discussion and we encourage the VA to engage in the appropriate outreach to seek such input.

Further, we share the VA's goal to provide our veterans with safe, effective, and timely health care, and we continue to believe that the well-being and safety of veterans should be of paramount consideration when changes to VHA policies are considered. Accordingly, we remain deeply concerned with, and have unresolved questions about the evidence upon which the VHA appears to be basing its new independent practice policy. Specifically, the October 11 letter references two studies that were funded by the American Association of Nurse Anesthetists, a not unbiased stakeholder. Moreover, the two studies did not examine veterans' health care specifically. The studies included no examination of any of the VA's own facilities. Efforts to study the proposed changes may be better served by the use of independently funded data that includes an examination of VA's facilities and their unique patient population, especially since the poorer health status of veterans increases the likelihood of surgical complications.

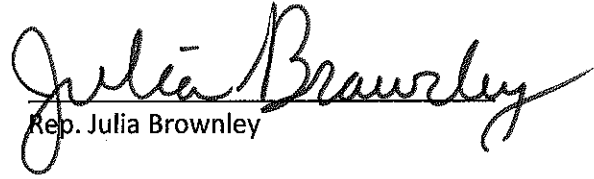
We would welcome the opportunity to discuss these issues further with you. We respectfully request the opportunity to meet and discuss with you the proposed Nursing Handbook and its impact on patient safety.

Thank you for your consideration of our request.

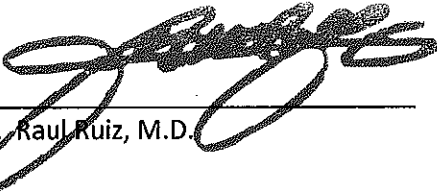
Sincerely,



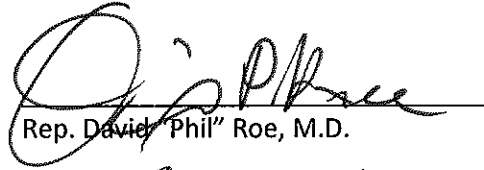
Rep. Dan Benishek, M.D.



Rep. Julia Brownley



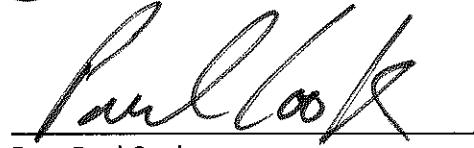
Rep. Raul Ruiz, M.D.



Rep. David "Phil" Roe, M.D.



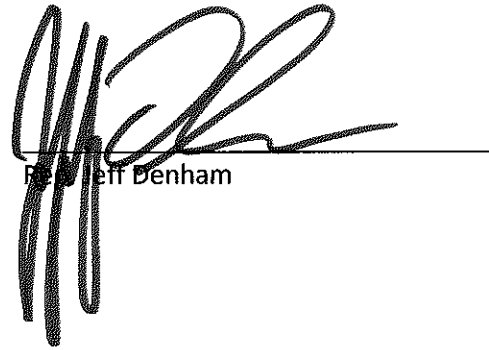
Rep. Doug Lamborn



Rep. Paul Cook



Rep. Mark Amodei



Rep. Jeff Denham