

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

June 21, 2018

Barbara A. Oemcke  
Medical Center Director  
Northern Arizona VA Health Care System  
500 Hwy 89N  
Prescott, AZ 86313

Dear Director Oemcke,

We write with grave concerns regarding recently released reports disclosing unacceptable health care quality metrics at the Community Living Center in Prescott. As revealed by these reports, the Prescott facility ranks among the lowest in the nation, and the worst in Arizona.

Nothing is more important than the care provided to our veterans and their families, and we are deeply disturbed by this facility's low rating and the implications for the care available to veterans in rural Arizona. No matter their zip code, every single veteran in Arizona must have access to the same high quality of care. Rural veterans should not face disproportionate barriers to getting and staying healthy in their own communities near their families.

We respectfully request a response from you to the following questions regarding the low health outcomes and care being provided at your facility:

- What processes have been put into place to address and improve key quality metrics this facility scored poorly on, including long-term catheter placements, pressure ulcers, rates of urinary tract infections (UTI's), and rates of antipsychotic drug prescriptions provided to residents?
- Does the facility have adequate staffing levels to ensure patient-to-provider ratios that are necessary to improve care?
- How many veterans at CLC have been admitted or readmitted to a hospital in the last 18 months?

As you know, these are critical indicators and metrics that have implications for the likelihood of patients developing dangerous complications and infections, which can lead to costly inpatient hospitalizations and even death.

While some of these issues, including the overuse of chemical restraints like powerful antipsychotic drugs, are industry-wide across nursing facilities, their prevalence at VA nursing facilities is alarming and must be addressed immediately.

We understand rural communities face challenges in attracting and retaining qualified medical providers across settings, and we are committed to working to address these workforce issues.

However, without increased transparency and information, we cannot discern whether poor quality outcomes result from workforce challenges or poor administrative mismanagement.

In addition to responses to the questions listed above, we request that you provide our offices with updated quality ratings that are to be released in July, and indicate specifically which metrics have changes reflected in the ratings.

We stand ready to work with you to ensure no veteran receives substandard care in their community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Tom O'Halleran". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of each word being capitalized and prominent.

Tom O'Halleran  
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kyrsten Sinema". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of each word being capitalized and prominent.

Kyrsten Sinema  
Member of Congress