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May 19, 2016

The Honorable Robert McDonald
United States Secretary of Veterans Affairs
Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Ave, NW
Washington D.C. 20420

Dear Secretary McDonald:

I was made aware of a billing issues survey that the Kansas EMS Association conducted of its members in 2016, which shows that Kansas EMS agencies have noted a delay in prompt payment for services rendered for VA patients in excess of \$1.2 million dating as far back as 24 months. Fifty-nine Kansas EMS agencies responded and 90% of those agencies reported issues. Survey follow up questions outlined the amount of the unpaid bills and the length of the delays in timely payment of those claims. One notable exclusion from the survey data is a Wichita-area EMS agency that alone has a backlog of approximately \$820,000 in delayed payments from the VA.

The Kansas EMS Association has stated that the issue stems from internal VA processes along with the lack of personnel dedicated to the task. Additionally the VA has instructed EMS agencies that when they transport Veterans with VA benefits they are to first submit claims to the VA even in cases where the Veteran has other insurance or Medicare coverage. It is not unusual or unexpected that claims may be denied by the VA. However, the issue is that there is substantial delay in processing the claim and the subsequent denial leaves agencies outside the timely filing requirement for other healthcare coverage. The EMS agencies are then unable to file for reimbursement with the Veteran's other coverage.

I ask that you investigate these claims of delayed reimbursement so that the EMS agencies in Kansas may do their jobs knowing they will be rightfully reimbursed in a timely manner. Specifically, what steps are being taken to rectify these delays and clear the current backlog? Is this problem unique to Kansas? If it is a unique problem, why and what is being done to prevent this from occurring in the future? Without this kind of certainty, it may cause some of the agencies to cease operations in particular parts of Kansas and make it much more difficult for veterans to get the care they need and deserve. I appreciate your prompt reply.

Sincerely,



Lynn Jenkins, CPA
Member of Congress