

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515-1314

September 8, 2014

The Honorable Robert A. McDonald
Office of the Secretary
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue, NW
Washington DC 20420

RE: New National Recruitment Effort to Bring Needed Medical Professionals to VA

Dear Secretary McDonald:

I would like to commend you on your leadership and commitment to intensifying efforts by your agency to provide timely and quality health care for our nation's veterans. In particular, I applaud your recent initiative with higher education institutions aimed at recruiting the best and the brightest health care professionals to the Department of Veterans Affairs to enhance and expand care for veterans.

In this vein and as you leverage your relationships with academia, I want to also urge you to reach out to and form partnerships with local community colleges as well. Community colleges provide a deep pool of talented students with in-demand skills in various health care fields. They are at the epicenter of education and training and represent a resource that should not be overlooked.

Today, community colleges train more than half of the country's entire health care workforce. Sixty percent of nurses currently entering the health care field are community college graduates. By 2020, there will be 1.2 million expected job openings for registered nurses, 370,000 openings for licensed practical nurses, 105,000 openings for dental hygienists, and 121,000 projected jobs for emergency medical technicians. Many, if not most, of these jobs will be filled by professionals who received their initial training and sub-baccalaureate health care credentials at community colleges.

In and around the 14th Congressional District of Illinois that I am proud to represent, institutions such as Elgin Community College, McHenry Community College, Waubensee Community College, College of DuPage, College of Lake County, Kishwaukee Community College, and Joliet Junior College offer state-of-the-art facilities and equipment for training health care professionals. Programs range from 16-week certificates to 2-year associate of applied science degrees. Many graduates score above the state and national averages on their licensure and certificate exams.

As you move forward with your recruitment initiative, I strongly encourage you to incorporate a concerted outreach to community colleges. I am confident you will find highly qualified, dedicated, and motivated individuals who are eager to care for and serve those who have served and protected our nation.

Sincerely,



Randy Hultgren
Member of Congress (IL-14)