Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

February 23, 2023

Dr. Judy Hayman
Executive Director
Montana VA Healthcare System
Fort Harrison VAMC
3687 Veterans Drive
Fort Harrison, MT 59636

Dear Dr. Hayman,

It has come to my attention that a veteran was denied care at a Montana VA Clinic for refusing to wear a mask. Denying anyone, particularly a veteran, medical care over a personal decision is outrageous and violates the Hippocratic Oath. The pandemic is over, and it is time to end all mandates.

The specific incident that was brought to my attention occurred last week at the Benjamin Charles Steele VA Clinic. Travis Norby, an Army veteran, was turned away from his appointment over his unwillingness to wear a face mask.[1] Mr. Norby served our country in Iraq by commanding a mechanized infantry company and now works as a firefighter.[2] It is wrong that people like Mr. Norby honorably serve our country overseas and then are denied proper medical treatment at home due to an outdated and senseless mandate.

The mask mandate remains in place despite it being evident that masks do not stop the spread of COVID-19. Additionally, masks prevent proper breathing and make social interactions more difficult. As you know, in September 2022, President Biden said that the COVID-19 pandemic is over in the United States.[3] Additionally, the Biden Administration announced that the public health and national emergencies would terminate on May 11, 2023. While the date is arbitrary, even the President recognizes he can no longer hold the public hostage with executive powers. When do you expect the mask mandate to end within the Montana VA Healthcare System? Do you plan on urging the Veterans Health Administration and the Centers for Disease Control to end the mask mandate?

I commend Travis Norby for speaking out and bringing attention to the injustice within the Montana VA Healthcare System. However, I am concerned other veterans had similar experiences and are afraid to speak out due to fear of retribution. How many veterans have the Montana VA denied treatment to over their decision to not wear a face mask? Do you know of any specific situations where a veteran's health was adversely affected due to the Montana VA Healthcare System's unwillingness to provide treatment?

---

[1] https://montanatalks.com/open-letter-from-a-montana-veteran-denied-care-by-the-va/
[2] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zb3HZHGxz4g
[3] https://www.cbsnews.com/news/biden-covid-pandemic-over/

Given all the problems facing the Montana VA Healthcare System, it bewilders me you are prioritizing efforts to punish veterans by enforcing a mask mandate. I urge you to immediately lift this requirement at all Montana VA Healthcare facilities. I eagerly await your response and action.

Sincerely,

Matt Rosendale
Member of Congress

CC: Dr. Shereef Elnahal, Under Secretary for Health, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs