

United States Senate  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 13, 2022

Daniel Zomchek, Ph.D.  
Director  
Clement J. Zablocki VA Medical Center  
5000 West National Avenue  
Milwaukee, WI 53295-1000

Dear Director Zomchek:

Over the past few weeks, my office has heard from a number of Milwaukee Veterans Affairs Medical Center (VAMC) employees expressing concerns about the facility's COVID-19 vaccine mandate. Despite their willingness to continue to be tested for COVID-19 or natural immunity from the virus, Milwaukee VAMC officials are apparently forcing these employees to be fully vaccinated.

According to a public statement from the Milwaukee VAMC, all personnel must be fully vaccinated "or have an approved reasonable accommodation for medical, pregnancy, or religious reasons."<sup>1</sup> However, a recent article reported that at least five nurses at the Milwaukee VAMC who had previously received vaccine exemptions for medical or religious reasons, claim that "senior staff are [now] denying that exemption."<sup>2</sup> Those unvaccinated nurses and many other VAMC employees that have contacted my office fear that they may lose their jobs unless they adhere to the coercive mandate.

We now know that individuals who are fully vaccinated can contract and spread COVID-19. That is what the "science" tells us without dispute. Even Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Director Rochelle Walensky acknowledges this fact. Given the vaccines' inability to prevent infection and spread, the COVID-19 vaccine mandates are pointless and destructive. The Milwaukee VAMC employees that reached out to my office fear that the facility's coercive vaccine mandate will cause staff shortages and directly effect patient care. I share those legitimate concerns.

In order to better understand how the Milwaukee VAMC is addressing its employees' concerns about the COVID-19 vaccine mandate, I request you immediately provide my office with a briefing on the matter and the following information:

1. How many COVID-19 vaccine exemptions have been granted for Milwaukee VAMC employees?

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<sup>1</sup> Sam Kraemer, Milwaukee VA COVID vaccine mandate, unvaccinated nurses worry, Fox 6 Milwaukee, April 10, 2022, <https://www.fox6now.com/news/milwaukee-va-covid-vaccine-mandate>.

<sup>2</sup> *Id.*

2. How many requests for exemptions have been denied?
3. What is the purpose of requiring COVID-19 vaccination if it cannot prevent infection and spread?
4. Is it true that the facility will not offer weekly COVID-19 testing to employees or test for natural immunity? If so, please explain the justification for these policies.

Please provide the briefing and this information as soon as possible but no later than April 27, 2022. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Ron Johnson  
United States Senator

cc: Ms. Victoria P. Brahm  
Network Director  
VA Great Lakes Health Care System

The Honorable Michael J. Missal  
Inspector General  
Department of Veterans Affairs