



CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

CONGRESSWOMAN  
CHELLIE PINGREE

1ST DISTRICT  
MAINE

December 11, 2012

The Honorable Allison A. Hickey  
Under Secretary for Benefits  
Department of Veterans Affairs  
Washington DC, 20525

Dear General Hickey,

Thank you for your continued efforts to transform the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) into a 21<sup>st</sup> Century organization. I write to you today concerning an inequity in the disability claims system that negatively affects women veterans who experienced military sexual trauma (MST) or suffer from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and or Depression that was caused by other traumatic events in service.

As you know, the VA commonly service-connects male veterans for erectile dysfunction (ED). Many of these veterans are primarily service-connected for ED based on physical and psychological effects of military sexual trauma. Male veterans can also be service-connected for ED on a secondary basis because it is a common side effect of medication these veterans are prescribed for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and Depression. I was troubled to learn that VA currently has no diagnostic code for female sexual arousal disorder (FSAD), a very common disorder in women veterans who have also experienced in-service rape or sexual harassment or take medications for service-connected PTSD and Depression.

Women survivors of military sexual trauma may also suffer from sexual dysfunction due to psychological or physical injuries that are service-related. I have been contacted by female veterans, and have been made aware of countless more, who have had their disability claims denied because the VA has no diagnostic code for this condition for female veterans. I think you would agree with me that the disability claims system should equally support men and women veterans, and if men are commonly service-connected for a condition, then their female veteran counterparts who suffer similar service-related injuries should receive the same benefit.

I respectfully request that you review this and take the necessary action to ensure female veterans receive every benefit that they are entitled to. During your November 2012 visit to the Togus, Maine Regional Office, you indicated that veterans would be notified soon that VBA will begin to review MST-related claims that were previously denied to ensure that veterans were not denied erroneously. It is my hope that the issue of FSAD when connected to MST claims can be part of this review.

Thank you for your attention to the important matter. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Chellie Pingree  
Member of Congress

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