THE SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
WASHINGTON

April 9, 2021

**MEMORANDUM FOR UNDER SECRETARIES, ASSISTANT SECRETARIES, AND OTHER KEY OFFICIALS**

**SUBJECT:** VA's 120-day Task Force on Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Access

It is a strategic imperative that we build a VA that weaves the principles of inclusion, diversity, equity and access into the fabric of our mission for our teammates, Veterans, their families, caregivers and survivors. In my recent remarks, *Equal Employment Opportunity and Diversity and Inclusion*, I shared my commitment to advancing equity in VA and providing all employees with opportunities to reach their full potential.

The President's Executive Order 13985, *Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government,* places a renewed focus on assessing systemic barriers across Federal agencies. Inclusion, diversity, equity and access are strengths, never weaknesses, among Veterans, VA employees and all of America. We have an unprecedented opportunity to be ambitious by extending the current momentum to the VA's wider inclusion, diversity, equity and access initiatives.

I have directed the VA Chief of Staff to charter a 120-day task force on inclusion, diversity, equity and access, which commenced on April 1, 2021. The VA Deputy Chief of Staff/White House Liaison is charged with engaging partners across our system to ensure that we build an inclusive team to inform the outcomes of this task force. We face a set of strategic opportunities: (1) to design a holistic and integrated VA mission on inclusion, diversity, equity and access, (2) to review our existing policies, (3) to use data to refine best practices, and (4) to create a sense of jointness across our agency on these initiatives. I want to be clear that inclusion, diversity, equity and access extends beyond our VA workforce. It impacts the way we deliver benefits and services to our Veterans, their families, caregivers and survivors.

The Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Access Task Force will conduct a 120-day sprint focused on five objectives:

Objective 1. Execute on requirements outlined in Executive Order 13985 and any other subsequent, relevant Executive Orders.
Objective 2. Examine and develop the VA's strategic mission, goals and objectives on inclusion, diversity, equity, and access.
Objective 3. Conduct a whole of VA review of policies, programming, training, and strategic communications for workforce and Veterans' initiatives.

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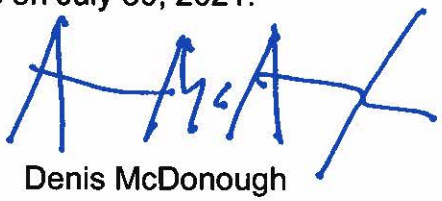
Objective 4. Identify opportunities to leverage data to inform and operationalize inclusion, diversity, equity and access.
Objective 5. Develop institutional access points for underserved communities to establish strategic partnerships with VA.

The task force's goal is to offer concrete, actionable recommendations, while building jointness across the VA system on inclusion, diversity, equity and access. I ask that you continue to lend us your voices as the task force meets these strategic opportunities head on. The task force will provide monthly updates of their progress and is tasked to provide their findings to me on July 30, 2021.



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