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# U.S. House of Representatives

## COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

ONE HUNDRED EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS

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WASHINGTON, DC 20515

<http://veterans.house.gov>

October 7, 2024

Shereef Elnahal, M.D.  
 Under Secretary for Health  
 U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs  
 810 Vermont Ave. N.W.  
 Washington, DC 20420

Dear Under Secretary Elnahal:

On September 24, 2024, the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations held a hearing titled, "*VA Accountability: What Has Happened to Hampton?*". The hearing focused on the disturbing leadership failures at the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Hampton Medical Center (Hampton VA), which the Office of Inspector General repeatedly documented, and on whistleblower retaliation and patient safety violation allegations brought by Hampton VA whistleblowers. As you can imagine, these allegations are incredibly concerning for constituents in Hampton Roads who use this facility, and veterans nationwide. We expect better from VA.

The Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations has been investigating the Hampton VA leadership issues and the whistleblowers' allegations for months. While this hearing was an important aspect of this investigation, our work is far from over. We understand that shortly after OIG released a third Hampton VA report<sup>1</sup>, Hampton VA Executive Director Taquisa Simmons was reassigned to a position within the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Office of Social Work Services. This development raises several questions. We want to ensure VHA is not simply shuffling employees around to avoid holding them accountable when their poor performance makes it impossible to keep them in their current position. As such, we ask you respond to the following questions by **October 21, 2024**:

1. What is Dr. Simmons' new job title? What is the position description for this role?
2. Why was Dr. Simmons reassigned to the VHA Office of Social Work Services?
3. Was the VHA Office of Social Work Services position Dr. Simmons currently fills vacant or was this position created specifically for Dr. Simmons?

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<sup>1</sup> See VA OIG Report, *Mismanaged Surgical Privileging Actions and Deficient Surgical Service Quality Management Processes at the Hampton VA Medical Center in Virginia* (July 23, 2024), <https://www.vaog.gov/reports/hotline-healthcare-inspection/mismanaged-surgical-privileging-actions-and-deficient>.

4. Does Dr. Simmons make the same salary in her current role as she did as the Hampton VA Executive Director?
5. Is Dr. Simmons' current position a supervisory position? If so, how many staff does Dr. Simmons supervise?
6. Is Dr. Simmons' current position permanent or temporary?
7. As poor leadership is not unique to Hampton, will VHA commit to conducting a comprehensive review of medical center director hiring practices and performance?

We appreciate your attention to this matter and would be happy to discuss this matter in more detail. If you have any questions, please contact committee staff.

Sincerely,



**JEN KIGGANS**  
Chairwoman  
Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations



**MATTHEW M. ROSENDALE, Sr.**  
Member of Congress

Cc: The Honorable Frank J. Mrvan, Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations