

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 21, 2023

The Honorable Denis R. McDonough
Secretary of Veterans Affairs
US Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20420

Dear Honorable McDonough:

Thank you for your recent responsiveness to my inquiries on behalf of Wisconsin Veterans who were misdiagnosed for Traumatic Brain Injuries (TBI) and other neurological conditions in the Compensation and Pension (C&P) process, specifically in regard to examinations conducted by Dr. Mary Lanska of the Tomah VA Medical Center. I appreciate that the VA has conducted further comprehensive review of this physician's C&P exams and determined that they were inadequate. In your mission to provide the full compensation and care that U.S. service members have earned, I value the ongoing efforts of the VA to identify all impacted Veterans previously seen by Dr. Lanska in the C&P process and to ensure they qualify for a second opinion. It is critical that any Veteran misdiagnosed previously is made whole.

As my office has engaged with Veterans impacted by Dr. Lanska's faulty examination in the C&P process, there has been increased concern that the inadequacies of her care go beyond the C&P exam process and into her clinical work. As example, Veteran Zachary Skrede recently shared his concern with the difficulty he experienced getting an examination for multiple sclerosis (MS) from Dr. Mary Lanska, even after receiving a referral for the examination from his Primary Care Provider. He reports that Dr. Lanska reviewed his records and recommended he "continue working with mental health and possibly take up yoga or tai-chi, no further testing would be necessary." Mr. Skrede reports he later received imaging tests at a private hospital and was diagnosed with MS.

Just this past winter, the VA continued to defend Dr. Lanska's work, indicating via letter dated December 28, 2022, that she "met the standard of care with acceptable interrater reliability" and that "there have been no concerns noted about her clinical practice." Now, only months later, after at my request the VA has conducted a more comprehensive review of her C&P work, has it been determined that those exams were indeed inadequate. In this light, I am requesting that the VA takes steps to review Dr. Lanska's clinical work in a more comprehensive manner than has been taken to date. I ask that this review include interviews with Veterans who have made reports of concern, interviews with County Veterans Service Officers in her geographic service area, and an analysis of Dr. Lanska's clinical work to determine if there is a trend of negative opinions, refusal to conduct examinations, or incomplete examinations. I am also requesting that this investigation take place outside of the VISN 12 structure to ensure a fair and unbiased review.

I look forward to your reply confirming if an additional investigation or review will be conducted and request your response by May 24, 2023.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tammy Baldwin". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator

TB:sba