



# Vermont State Employees' Association

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March 15, 2016

The Honorable Helen Head  
Vermont State House  
115 State Street  
Montpelier, VT 05633-5301

Dear Ms. Head:

Having served as an active participant in the Working Group on the Vermont Veterans' Home Governance and Funding, I write today to express strong support for increased oversight of the Home by the Agency of Human Services, which should include the ability to remove employees in exempt positions. Furthermore, my fellow VSEA members and I request your support for the \$5.9 million allocated to the Home in the Governor's proposed budget.

While VSEA has endeavored to play a positive and constructive role in the discussion about the future of the Vermont Veterans' Home, including the campaign for Massachusetts Medicaid funding eligibility, we continue to have profound concerns with a variety of management and operational structures currently in place at the Home. I respectfully request that you, and the members of the House Committee on General, Housing and Military Affairs, address these pressing institutional concerns.

A federal mediator was brought in to work with staff and management to create a more sensible and practical schedule for Veterans' Home employees. Through the work of the mediator, we have learned that the scheduling system in place at the Vermont Veterans' Home is unlike that of *any* other similar facility in the country. This unorthodox schedule has resulted in low employee morale, increased overtime costs, and high employee call-out rates. The unusual decision to craft the Home's schedule around requests for educational leave has resulted in significant staffing shortages.

This schedule is the product of Vermont Veterans' Home's Director of Nursing, who has been operating with impunity. The nursing director's father holds a seat on the Home's board of trustees. This alarming situation presents a clear conflict of

interest. We request statutory implementation of a common-sense policy that would bar the immediate family members of the Vermont Veterans' Home senior staff from board membership.

I appreciate your attention to these vital matters as we move forward with efforts to safeguard the indispensable work of the Vermont Veterans' Home. I look forward to discussing these issues with you and the members of the Committee.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Barbara King". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "B" and a long, horizontal flourish at the end of the name.

Barbara King

Employee, Vermont Veterans' Home; Member, VSEA Legislative Committee

cc: The Honorable Shapleigh Smith, Jr.

The Honorable Thomas Stevens

The Honorable Brian K. Savage

The Honorable Diana Gonzalez

The Honorable Gabrielle Lucke

The Honorable Mary A. Morrissey

The Honorable Job Tate

The Honorable Tommy Walz