

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

December 19, 2019

The Honorable Robert Wilkie
Secretary of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Ave, NW
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Mr. Secretary:

In July, I spoke with the American Legion National Commander Reistad and Executive Director Louis Celli about their partnership with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Project ATLAS. Soon after, I spoke with you about my desire to expand this program to include Arizona. This project places full service telehealth pods in American Legion Posts located in underserved areas. The pods, which contain a full suite of medical equipment, including blood pressure cuffs, thermometers, and glucose monitors, connect geographically isolated veterans directly with VA providers via video link. This effort helps rural and other hard to reach veterans receive appropriate nonemergency care to manage chronic health issues and improve overall quality of life.

Geographic isolation and lack of access to healthcare are all too familiar to veterans in rural Arizona. In Northern Arizona, where it may take up to five hours for veterans to drive to the nearest VA Medical Center for health care, lack of infrastructure and access can lead to underdiagnoses of chronic illnesses and barriers for veterans to receive proper treatment. This problem is particularly acute among the Native American community, where American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars posts are often more conveniently located than the nearest VA facilities. It is for this reason that I would like to work with the VA and your partners to expand the telehealth pod program to Arizona. It would provide considerable benefits to an underserved population of veterans who have sacrificed to defend our country.

I ask that you support this proposed expansion of Project ATLAS to Arizona. My staff and I are ready to facilitate VA in identifying and placing the ATLAS pod in an Arizona community that would benefit from an expanded telehealth capability. Thank you for your focus on continuing to extend VA services to veterans in rural communities. I look forward to continuing this important work together.

Sincerely,



Kyrsten Sinema
U.S. Senate

CC: Ms. Leslyann Roose, ATLAS Program Manager, VA Office of Connected Care