



NATIONAL FEDERATION OF FEDERAL EMPLOYEES

Affiliated with the International Association of Machinists & Aerospace Workers, AFL-CIO

March 13, 2023

Representative Mark Takano
2078 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Senator Sherrod Brown
503 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Representative Takano and Senator Brown,

On behalf of the National Federation of Federal Employees, a national labor union representing approximately 110,000 federal employees, including approximately 10,000 within the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), I write today urging you to reintroduce VA Employee Fairness Act of 2021. As previous introducers of this bill, I thank you for your commitment to supporting VA employees. As you know, this legislation would expand collective bargaining rights for clinicians working at the VA, allowing them to improve the VA's ability to provide the highest standards of care for our veterans. This bill passed in the House last Congress with bipartisan support and 218 cosponsors.

Currently, Section 7422 of Title 38 restricts the collective bargaining rights of select clinical professionals such as nurses, doctors, and dentists in the VA over matters concerning professional conduct or competence, compensation, and patient care. These workers, classified as Title 38 employees, are seeking the same level of collective bargaining rights as other employees in the VA – rights that are also afforded to clinicians in the Department of Defense, other unionized federal employees, and clinicians in the private sector.

Without the ability to bargain collectively over peer review, compensation, and patient care issues, clinicians are unable to speak up on issues related to patient safety, and larger issues in VA healthcare facilities can potentially go unaddressed. The VA Employee Fairness Act would reduce turnover, increase staff levels, and improve the care that veterans receive by repealing the provisions from Section 7422 that limit collective bargaining rights for VA clinicians. Expanded collective bargaining rights for VA employees would improve both the recruitment and retention of qualified clinical professionals working and seeking work in the VHA system.

The exclusion of clinicians from the ability to collectively bargain on key topics prevents VA facilities from fulfilling their mission to provide the highest standards of care for our nation's heroes. Without a way to bring the issues affecting veterans to the bargaining table for discussion, the quality of care that veterans receive suffers.

On behalf of the thousands of dedicated VA employees that NFFE represents, we urge you to reintroduce VA Employee Fairness Act of 2021 to ensure expanded collective bargaining rights for VA employees. I look forward to working with each of you and your respective Veterans Affairs Committees to see this bill pass through Congress and signed into law by President Biden.

Sincerely,

Randy Erwin
National President
National Federation of Federal Employees, IAMAW, AFL-CIO