



March 4, 2025

The Honorable Doug Collins
Secretary of Veterans Affairs
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Secretary Collins,

On behalf of the more than 178,000 PAs (physician assistants/physician associates) throughout the United States, The American Academy of Physician Associates (AAPA) extends its congratulations on your confirmation as Secretary of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). As health care providers practicing in every medical and specialty setting, AAPA shares your commitments to providing timely access to care for all eligible veterans, family members, caregivers, and survivors, and to veteran-centered care.

VA is the single largest employer of PAs in the country. The nearly 3000 PAs currently practicing within the VA provide critically needed, essential access to care for veterans. PA's graduate-level training includes more than 2,000 hours of clinical rotations in family medicine, internal medicine, behavioral and mental health, emergency medicine, and other specialties across the lifespan. From pediatrics to geriatrics, PA-training provides a foundation to address veterans' diverse medical needs.¹

PAs improve access to care while providing high levels of quality and patient satisfaction on par with physicians.² PAs work to ensure the best possible care and outcomes for patients by promoting health, wellness, and disease prevention, while also diagnosing and treating acute and chronic diseases. The proven value of the PA profession has made it one of the fastest growing occupations per the Bureau of Labor Statistics, with a projected 28% increase in PAs from 2023 to 2033.³ This growth projection, along with the qualifications of PAs, suggests an increased utilization of PAs within the VA and elsewhere would improve access to high-quality, efficient care for veterans.

¹ American Academy of Physician Associates. What is a PA? <https://www.aapa.org/what-is-a-pa/>. Accessed February 19, 2025.

² Medicare Payment Advisory Commission. [Report to the Congress: Medicare and the health care delivery system](#). June 2019.

³ US Bureau of Labor Statistics, US Department of Labor. [Occupational Outlook Handbook. Physician Assistants. 2024](#). Accessed February 19, 2024.

We recognize the critical challenges facing the VA, and VA healthcare in particular. Among these are the severe occupational staffing shortages in many VA healthcare systems.⁴ Fully utilizing the expertise and clinical skills of PAs, authorizing them to practice medicine to the full extent of their education and training, and facilitating the recruitment and retention within the VA of PAs is an essential part of the solution.

As the Administration implements the *Authority of VA Professionals to Practice Health Care* regulation issued by the first Trump Administration,⁵ we look forward to working with you and the Department to improve patient care and access to highly qualified healthcare providers by ensuring PAs are granted full practice authority and recognized as licensed independent practitioners.

AAPA and the PA profession stand ready to work with VA to provide veterans access to the world-class care they deserve. If you have any questions, please contact Corey McGee at cmcgee@aapa.org or at 571-223-6855.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lisa M. Gables". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of each word being capitalized and prominent.

Lisa M. Gables, CPA
Chief Executive Officer

⁴ US Department of Veterans Affairs Office of the Inspector General. [OIG Determination of Veterans Health Administration's Severe Occupational Staffing Shortages Fiscal Year 2024](#). August, 2024.

⁵ Rule by the Veterans Affairs Department. [Authority of VA Professionals to Practice Health Care](#). 2020.