United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 19, 2014

The Honorable Chuck Hagel
Secretary of Defense
1400 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1400

The Honorable Eric Shinseki
Secretary of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue, NW
Washington DC 20420

Dear Secretary Hagel and Secretary Shinseki,

We write to request your views regarding the Institute of Medicine's (IOM) report *Returning Home from Iraq and Afghanistan: Assessment of Readjustment Needs of Veterans, Service Members, and Their Families* and the more recently-released report *Preventing Psychological Disorders in Service Members and Their Families: An Assessment of Programs.*

Together, these two assessments fulfill the requirement of the Fiscal Year 2008 National Defense Authorization Act to report on the mental health of service members deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan and military family members. Undertaking these studies demonstrates important first steps in addressing the growing need to elevate mental health care to the same level of care as for physical health.

While we are encouraged by the work of both the Department of Defense (DOD) and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to better address the mental health challenges facing veterans and their families, we are concerned by the findings from these two reports. Specifically, we are concerned with IOM's conclusion that "screening, assessment, and treatment approaches for psychological health problems are not always implemented between and within DOD and VA in a consistent manner or aligned with the evidence base, which threatens the delivery of high-quality care and hampers evaluation efforts."

We are interested to learn whether this finding and other findings contained in the IOM study are consistent with the DOD and VA's own assessments of the state of prevention and treatment for mental health among service members, military families, and veterans. Therefore, we request a detailed assessment of where DOD and VA have identified gaps in the prevention and treatment

of psychological disorders among those seeking access to mental health services. In addition, we request DOD and VA's plan to implement IOM's recommendations to better prevent and treat mental illness within the military and veteran community. We appreciate your prompt attention to these important issues.

Sincere regards,

Roy Blunt
United States Senator

Jerry Moran
United States Senator

Debbie Stabenow
United States Senator