

**United States Senate**  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 28, 2020

The Honorable Robert Wilkie  
Secretary of Veterans Affairs  
810 Vermont Avenue  
Washington, D.C. 20420

Dear Secretary Wilkie,

Thank you for your January 24, 2020 response letter regarding the Maine congressional delegation's concerns about delayed payments for community care services. I appreciate that the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is committed to resolving these claims, and will continue to closely track the payment process and listen to feedback from Maine community care providers to ensure their claims are processed in timely manner. It is my understanding that, following the rollout of Optum as the new third party contractor for the VA New England Healthcare System at the end of 2019, the claims process has improved for many Maine providers.

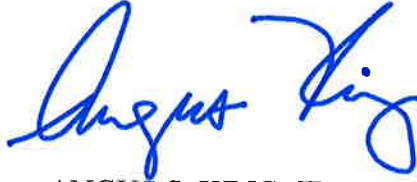
While this news is encouraging, I believe it is important to bring to your attention the adverse impact delayed payments can have on Maine community care providers and the eligible veterans they serve.

FirstLight Home Care, a Maine-based personal care services agency, announced this week that it plans to discontinue its work with the VA. FirstLight cites continued delays in the VA claims process and a lack of transparency with the payment schedule for its decision to end services to Maine veterans. I am deeply concerned about the clients who will lose the essential services the agency currently provides. This announcement is a painful example of why the VA, in partnership with Optum, must remain vigilant to guarantee timely payment processing. As mentioned in the Maine congressional delegation's November 7, 2019 letter, Maine community care providers from around the state have raised these concerns and it is imperative the VA do more to build trust with these providers.

As such, I am requesting that the VA immediately organize a briefing with Optum and community care providers in Maine on the new claims processing system. Provider concerns need to be addressed to help foster a strong and transparent relationship between parties; Maine providers deserve a clear understanding of the new system so they can efficiently navigate future claims. I understand such briefings have occurred at other VA Medical Centers throughout the country and have proved productive.

I look forward to working with you, Optum, Togus VA Medical Center, and Maine providers to build understanding and to continue streamlining payment processing so our veterans can access the care they are owed.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Angus King". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Angus" and the last name "King" clearly legible.

ANGUS S. KING, JR.  
United States Senator

Cc: Dr. Kameron L. Matthews, VA Deputy Undersecretary for Health for Community Care  
Cc: Trayce B. Davis, Medical Center Director, VA Maine Healthcare System