

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 3, 2016

The Honorable Scott Walker
Governor of Wisconsin
115 East Capitol
Madison, WI 53702

Dear Governor Walker:

I want to bring to your attention that after being fired from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) in November 2015, David Houlihan, the former Chief of Staff at the Tomah VA Medical Center, opened a private psychiatric practice in La Crosse, Wisconsin.

It is my understanding that your Administration received a whistleblower complaint against Mr. Houlihan in August 2014 and that the state Department of Safety and Professional Services opened an investigation in January 2015.

At the federal level, I first called for the VA and Veterans Affairs Office of Inspector General (VA OIG) to investigate prescribing practices at the Tomah VA in June 2014. Investigations were launched by the VA and VA OIG in January 2015.

Last August a report released by the VA OIG confirmed that the Tomah VA physicians entrusted with veterans care, including Houlihan, tragically failed all veterans and their families when they allowed a young Marine Veteran to die at the facility in August 2014.

The VA then took action last November to remove the Tomah VA Medical Center Chief of Staff from federal employment and revoke his clinical privileges. Unquestionably, these actions were long overdue as Mr. Houlihan has no business treating our Nation's veterans and he should never again serve our veterans and their families again- whether at a VA facility, through care funded by the VA in the community, or in private practice.

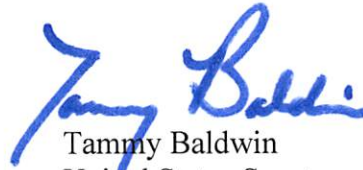
I have requested that the VA immediately halt any potential referrals to Mr. Houlihan through the VA Choice Program, but until the state moves forward with its actions, he will still be licensed to practice medicine in Wisconsin. It is my understanding that in a unanimous vote on December 16, 2015, the Wisconsin Medical Examining Board found probable cause that Mr. Houlihan "committed unprofessional conduct and therefore to issue the Complaint and hold a hearing on such conduct pursuant to Wis. Stat. § 448.02(3)(b)." According to this statute, the board shall render a decision within 90 days after the date on which the hearing is held. However, at this same Board meeting, a petition for extension of time was also granted to Houlihan.

As such, I would like an update on the status of the state investigation that was launched over a year ago in January 2015. I would also like an update on any actions taken by your

Administration regarding Mr. Houlihan's license to practice medicine in Wisconsin, especially given the fact that he has now opened a private psychiatric practice in La Crosse.

It is essential that we ensure that those who pose a threat to patient safety be denied the opportunity to treat the people we work for. I look forward to your response on this important matter.

Sincerely,



Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator