

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-3305

August 15, 2019

The Honorable Robert Wilkie
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20420

Dear Secretary Wilkie,

I am writing to follow up on the letter from July 11th signed by me and 33 of my House and Senate colleagues expressing support for the AbilityOne Program. As you may know, the AbilityOne Program provides employment opportunities to the blind or those who have significant disabilities, including veterans. Through partnerships with community-based nonprofit agencies, the AbilityOne Program serves federal customers, including the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), by providing them with high quality products and services.

Due to recent legal challenges, several nonprofit agencies participating in the AbilityOne Program have been notified that they will lose current contracts with the VA. As a result, nonprofits across the country will have to eliminate job opportunities for the blind and significantly disabled, including in my district. IFB Solutions, a Winston-Salem based nonprofit agency that is the largest employer of the blind in the United States, has several contracts with the VA to provide prescription eyewear. The loss of these contracts will likely result in 137 jobs currently filled by blind Americans being eliminated by the end of October.

It is disappointing that your schedule prevented you from speaking to me personally about this important matter. While this issue continues to be litigated, I ask for your personal attention to ensure the VA continues contracting with nonprofit agencies that employ the blind and significantly disabled. It is my intent to work tirelessly with the VA and other parties to find a swift, permanent, and equitable solution to preserve current AbilityOne contracts and provide further contracting opportunities in the future. Our blind and significantly disabled Americans deserve nothing less.

Sincerely,



Virginia Foxx
Representative