

# Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515-3202

March 24, 2022

The Honorable Denis McDonough  
United States Department of Veterans Affairs  
810 Vermont Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Secretary McDonough:

We write to express our strong opposition to the Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) recommendations to President Biden's Asset and Infrastructure Review (AIR) Commission to drastically reduce the services of Northport VA Medical Center (VAMC). The VA made these recommendations without consulting members of congress or discussing the impacts of these changes with leaders in Long Island's veteran community. The ramifications of this decision would drastically change the delivery of veteran healthcare services on Long Island and create barriers to veterans' access to care. We urge you to reject this proposal and instead explore opportunities to modernize Northport VAMC without compromising many of the critical services offered to Long Island's veterans.

On March 14<sup>th</sup>, the VA released its recommendation to turn the Northport VAMC, Long Island's only VAMC, into a subacute center by discontinuing residential rehabilitation services, inpatient medical and surgical services, and emergency room services. This proposal to eliminate emergency services at Northport would create extra burdens for veterans when attempting to cover their emergency visit through the TRICARE program. Moving rehabilitation services to St. Albans would force veterans to commute into New York City for treatment, which can be a difficult and time-consuming experience that complicates their rehabilitation. Discontinuing inpatient surgical and medical services limits the opportunities available to access specialty care options without designating a reliable alternative. These wholesale changes will further frustrate our veterans, who rely upon the services currently offered by Northport VAMC.

There is no question that Northport VA would benefit from investments that modernize its facilities and improve the quality of care offered to our veterans. Discontinuing services without discussing the consequences with local stakeholders is not an acceptable strategy. We are happy to facilitate such a discussion with local stakeholders before these recommendations are open to public hearings, so the VA may fully understand the impacts of these recommendations.

Long Island is home to over 100,000 Veterans and their families, many of whom make full use of the crucial support services offered by Northport VAMC. These proposed changes would all but close the only VAMC in our market and significantly impact access to care. We strongly oppose these recommendations, and we ask that you reconsider such changes before submitting to the President.

Sincerely,



ANDREW R. GARBARINO  
Member of Congress



LEE ZELDIN  
Member of Congress



THOMAS R. SUOZZI  
Member of Congress



KATHLEEN M. RICE  
Member of Congress