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Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515-3214

August 10, 2006

The Honorable James Nicholson
Secretary
United States Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20420

Dear Mr. Secretary,

I am writing to join Senator Hillary Clinton in urging you to use your upcoming visit to the New York to announce that you will be keeping open both the New York and Brooklyn campuses of the VA New York Harbor Healthcare System ("Manhattan VA Hospital" and "Brooklyn VA Hospital", respectively). The Manhattan VA Hospital, which is located in my district, provides easy access to patients from around the New York Metropolitan area, and is the only tertiary care facility for numerous high technology services in a 100-mile radius.

The Manhattan VA Hospital has received an unprecedented six designations by the VA for Centers of Excellence in cardiac surgery, cardiovascular surgery, HIV/AIDS, dialysis, rehabilitation medicine and neurosurgery. The VA has cited the hospital as the premier hospital for cardiac surgery outcomes in the country. The Manhattan VA Hospital is also the only facility in the entire Northeast corridor that makes prosthetics. Since returning Iraqi veterans are more likely to have lost limbs than returning veterans of other wars, the Manhattan VA Hospital's expertise in prosthetics will be essential to care for wounded soldiers returning from Iraq and Afghanistan now and in caring for those veterans throughout their lifetimes.

The indisputably high quality of care provided by the Manhattan VA Hospital is partially the result of its strong ties to premier medical establishments such as the NYU School of Medicine, NYU Medical Center and Bellevue Medical Center. The fine medical specialists who treat veterans because of these affiliations will no longer be available if services are consolidated in a distant location.

Finally, New York City may be compact, but it is not always easy to get around. The commute to another hospital would be too difficult for many veterans, particularly the disabled, causing them to delay or forego necessary medical treatment. The Brooklyn VA Hospital is not near any subway. For the tens of thousands of veterans who do not own cars, the Brooklyn VA Hospital is simply out of reach. Any transfer of services from the Manhattan VA Hospital would

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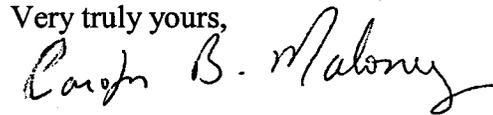
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be detrimental to thousands of patients from all around the New York City area, especially for tertiary care services.

The VA should not be considering consolidating services or closing either the Manhattan or Brooklyn facilities. Rather, the goal should be to strengthen the care provided at *both* hospitals so that health services for New York's veterans are better and *more* available, not harder to reach, with reduced access to some of the country's best medical facilities. The Veterans Administration cannot eliminate affiliations with world class medical institutions without degrading the quality of care for veterans. It would be impossible to move these hospitals to new locations without impacting access to care.

I hope you will use your visit to the Manhattan VA Hospital tomorrow to make clear that the United States will not forget the New York veterans who helped to fight for freedom around the globe. These veterans should continue to have access to the quality health care they need and deserve.

Very truly yours,



CAROLYN B. MALONEY

Member of Congress

CBM/mre

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