

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 14, 2022

The Honorable Denis McDonough  
Secretary of Veterans Affairs  
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs  
810 Vermont Ave, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20420

Dear Secretary McDonough:

We write to express concerns regarding the Department of Veterans' Affairs (VA) recommendations to the Asset and Infrastructure Review Commission. We strongly urge the VA – and the nascent Commission – to forgo any actions that would limit veterans' ability to get their VA care at VA facilities in New Hampshire or Vermont.

More than 140,000 veterans call New Hampshire or Vermont home. We owe it to veterans to ensure that they receive the care that they have earned and deserve after returning from their service. Currently, our veterans receive care through White River Junction VA Medical Center, Manchester VA Medical Center, and numerous Community Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs) throughout our states.

These VA facilities are critical resources to New Hampshire and Vermont veterans, allowing them to get their primary care, urgent and emergency care, and mental health services at VA sites near their homes. And beyond the care that they receive, veterans enjoy getting their care at VA facilities because they keep and form relationships with their fellow veterans— who work, receive care, and volunteer their time at VA facilities. VA Medical Centers and clinics in our states are also important training grounds for medical professionals and house research collaborations that yield benefits for the entire nation.

Many of our veterans, including those in rural areas like northern New Hampshire and Vermont's Northeast Kingdom, already face difficulties in accessing the care that they need, through the VA or the Community Care Network, including lack of public transportation and long drive times. Furthermore, New Hampshire is one of the only states that lack a full-service VA medical facility.

While we are relieved that the recommendations recognize the value of the White River Junction and Manchester VA Medical Centers, we believe that VA services in our states should be bolstered, not reduced. The current recommendations risk moving towards privatization and decreased access to VA care for veterans. We strongly urge the VA and the Commission to prioritize New Hampshire and Vermont veterans' access to VA care and services.

As a country, we must honor the service of our veterans by keeping their physical and mental wellbeing at the forefront of our decisions. We will continue Congressional oversight of this

process and look forward to engaging with the VA and the Commission as we ensure that our veterans receive the care they deserve.

Sincerely,



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Margaret Wood Hassan  
United States Senator



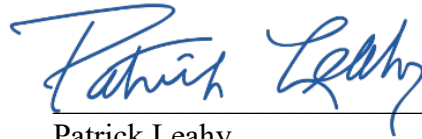
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Bernard Sanders  
United States Senator



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Jeanne Shaheen  
United States Senator



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Patrick Leahy  
United States Senator