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**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**

June 23, 2022

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

Dear Mr. Secretary:

I write today to express my frustration and anger with some of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) recent recommendations for the Asset and Infrastructure Review Commission (AIR Commission). The AIR recommendations includes an ill-conceived proposal to close the Paterson Community-Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC) in Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) 02 New Jersey Market which serves veterans in northern and central New Jersey. I call on you to retract this poorly advised and reckless decision that will hurt our veterans.

The VISN 2 New Jersey Market serves nearly 95,000 enrolled veterans and the Paterson CBOC serves approximately 4,000 enrolled veterans annually. Opened in 2004 at the direction of Congress, the Paterson CBOC provides primary care and specialty health services including mental health care. After years of effort, my office helped to secure the Paterson CBOC after learning that the East Orange Veterans Affairs Medical Center (VAMC) and Hackensack CBOC were badly overcrowded and unable to handle the volume of veterans needing care. Removing the Paterson CBOC will make our veterans' access to care significantly worse and other hospitals and clinics in the area will not be able to meet the demand. The outcome will be devastating for our communities.

I am also alarmed by the process used to make the AIR recommendations. In February 2022, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) released a report detailing significant gaps in the VA's market assessment data, the same data that was used to develop these misguided recommendations. The VA was charged with compiling data on veteran health care and supply, identifying gaps between supply and demand, and developing proposals to respond to those gaps to help craft its recommendations. Despite this mandate, GAO identified information discrepancies and incomplete data in VA documentation. This is unacceptable. This decision directly harming veterans in our district and across North Jersey is built on a faulty foundation. The VA cannot rely on flawed data to make momentous facility closure decisions that will impact thousands of Americans who rely for their very lives on VA resources.

Local veterans, New Jersey VA employees, and neighbors in our cities and towns are also disturbed by the impact of this proposed closure. In fact, veterans and VA workers across America openly oppose the VA's recommendation to close dozens of facilities across our nation. Veterans sensibly prefer to receive care at facilities where providers can specialize with the veteran population in their community. If the VA moves forward with these recommendations, veterans will either forgo care or be forced to receive care in private facilities which is costly and not veteran-specific. The VA says it came to its recommendations by asking "what is best for the veterans we serve." Removing a community clinic that thousands of veterans rely on is not "what is best" for veterans but is a slap in the face to those who served. I ask that you reconsider these bad recommendations and I look forward to your prompt response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bill Pascrell, Jr." The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Bill Pascrell, Jr.  
Member of Congress