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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
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August 22, 2003

Mr. Richard E. Larson, Executive Director
CARES Commission
Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Mr. Larson:

On behalf of the First Congressional District of New Jersey and the many veterans I represent, I offer my full and wholehearted support for the proposal to make the Gloucester County VA Clinic an approved Community-Based Outpatient Clinic, which I understand you will be reviewing as the CARES Commission conducts hearings this month. I am extremely confident that this approval will greatly benefit the deserving veterans of our region, and will be a sound investment of taxpayer resources.

For over three years, the Philadelphia VA Medical Center and many area officials, including myself, have worked persistently to improve the services the Gloucester County Clinic offers to area veterans. When we began our work in January 2000, the Clinic was open only one day per week and the clinic staff was composed of only one nurse practitioner. The average veteran interested in receiving care at the Clinic had to wait a remarkable and unacceptable six months for an appointment. Long before seeking approval of the clinic, we realigned resources and rallied the local community enough to improve the situation considerably: the clinic is now open three days per week, and to the staff that was once only a nurse practitioner, we have now added a clerical worker, a registered nurse, and a physician. We have managed to get the wait list for the Clinic down to three months instead of six.

We have come a long way, but there is still much more work to do and locally oriented resources can only be stretched so far. This is where the investment of additional federal resources is needed. Our local VA system and community have already laid the groundwork and infrastructure needed to establish the Clinic; the infusion of resources that comes with approval will now allow the Clinic to become fully functional, improve its efficiency, and live up to its potential. Where the veterans of Southern New Jersey now wait for three months for an appointment, their wait could and should be thirty days or less. Where the Clinic is now open for only three days per week with a four-person staff, the Clinic could and should be open for a full five-day week with expanded staff and equipment. I have listened to the veterans of my region and it is clear that they need a fully operational clinic in Southwestern New Jersey that does not require a trip into major cities such as Philadelphia or Wilmington. Your approval of the Clinic will allow our community to realize these important goals and needs.

When making a decision, I believe we must think of it in these terms: The average citizen fortunate enough to have health insurance in our country would rarely expect to wait more than 30 days for medical services. The veterans of my district and beyond deserve no less. When the

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brave men and women of Southern New Jersey and the surrounding region stepped forward to fight for and defend our country -- a task for which they can never truly be compensated -- our country promised to take care of them when they returned home. I believe that approval of this Clinic would go a long way towards making good on that promise.

Thank you very much for your consideration, and for your commitment to improving the lives of our veterans. I strongly hope that the Commission will approve our Gloucester County Clinic.

Should you have any further questions, or if I can offer any further input in this matter, please do not hesitate to call upon me at my District Office, at 506A White Horse Pike, Haddon Heights, NJ 08035, (856) 546-5100, Fax (856) 546-9529.

Sincerely,



Robert Andrews
Member of Congress

REA:als

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COMMERCE, JUSTICE, STATE & JUDICIARY

HOMELAND SECURITY

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OFFICIAL CONDUCT
RANKING MEMBERCONGRESSIONAL STEEL CAUCUS
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

ALAN B. MOLLOHAN

1ST DISTRICT, WEST VIRGINIA

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

September 23, 2003

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The Honorable Anthony J. Principi
Secretary
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20420-0001

Dear Mr. Secretary:

Please accept these comments regarding the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Draft National Capital Asset Realignment for Enhanced Services (CARES) Plan (Plan) for inclusion in the official record.

I am pleased to see that there are no adverse impacts to the Louis A Johnson VA Medical Center (Clarksburg) located in Clarksburg, West Virginia. This is an implicit recognition of the high market penetration that Clarksburg has and the vital services (both inpatient and outpatient surgery and PTSD, among others) that it provides.

However, there are two outstanding issues. I am very supportive of the proposal for a Community Based Outpatient Clinic to be located in Morgantown, WV and would like to see one established soon. West Virginia University is very supportive of the program and will be a great asset. Furthermore, the clinic will be able to provide service to veterans in surrounding states as well as those in West Virginia.

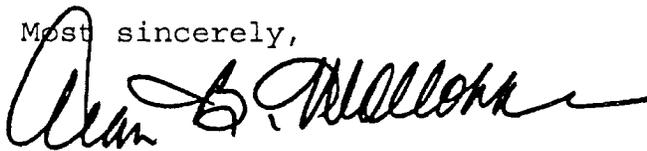
I am concerned that funding will be diverted from general construction activities to CARES initiatives, which would adversely affect Clarksburg's construction program. The hospital opened in 1951 with a major clinical addition in 1989. Clarksburg has continued to renovate space, but has a number of facility maintenance challenges. For example, they are currently awarding a replacement boiler contract for \$1.5 million to modernize their system and bring it into compliance with current standards. The air conditioning and electrical systems also need to be modernized. Additionally, there is a

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minor construction project currently under design and to be awarded for construction next year. This project will renovate their eye, oncology, and other specialty clinic space. It would be a detriment to Clarksburg if the larger construction projects covered by CARES took precedence over critically needed maintenance and infrastructure upgrades within existing facilities, which are not a part of the CARES process.

Thank you for your consideration of my comments. I look forward to your response.

Most sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Alan B. Mollohan". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Alan B. Mollohan

ABM:ao