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# United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

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TONY McCLAIN, STAFF DIRECTOR

December 11, 2020

Dr. Mark Upton  
Assistant Under Secretary for Health for Community Care  
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs  
810 Vermont Ave., NW  
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Dr. Upton:

I write today to bring an urgent matter to your attention and to suggest that we work together to benefit Kansan veterans. The Community-Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC) in Liberal, Kansas is slated to close on January 14, 2021. This CBOC serves a population of veterans in southwest Kansas who live in a rural area with limited access to healthcare providers. I am concerned that veterans who rely on the Liberal CBOC for the care they have earned will experience a lapse in care or be forced to travel to other VA facilities to receive health care after the facility closes. I urge you to engage with veterans in Kansas to educate them on any changes to their healthcare plan that may result from this closure, and include local healthcare providers near Liberal in the VA's Community Care Network.

Two specific issues concern me regarding the closure of the Liberal CBOC. First, we must make certain that veterans do not experience a lapse in care when the CBOC closes. The VA must take reasonable steps to educate the veterans who will be impacted by this closure. They should be made aware of the options that are available to them, how their care may change, and what they must do to continue receiving care from the VA. I urge you to work with your colleagues at the Dole VA Medical Center in Wichita and at the VA Heartland Network (VISN 15) to engage veterans to be sure they understand steps they must take to continue receiving VA healthcare in their community.

Next, I am concerned that veterans will be forced to travel long distances for their healthcare needs. I championed the VA MISSION Act, which was signed into law in 2018, to eliminate this barrier to care for veterans. They should not be forced to travel unreasonable distances to a VA facility when they can receive quality care from a local healthcare provider. Please take the necessary steps to expand the Community Care Network in Liberal to incorporate the needs of veterans who currently utilize the Liberal CBOC.

Please keep my staff apprised as you educate veterans and expand care options in the Liberal area. You can contact [REDACTED] to provide updates. I also request that you brief my staff on all actions that have been taken to address the concerns stated in this letter by December 29, 2020.

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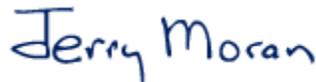
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TONY McCLAIN, STAFF DIRECTOR

There is no group of people that I hold in higher regard than those who served in uniform. I look forward to our continued work together to support veterans in Kansas and across the country.

Sincerely,



Jerry Moran  
Chairman

CC: Dr. Richard Stone