

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 19, 2017

The Honorable Mick Mulvaney
Director
Office of Management and Budget
725 17th Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20503

The Honorable David Shulkin
Secretary
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20420

Dear Director Mulvaney and Secretary Shulkin:

As you finalize the President's fiscal year (FY) 2018 budget request, we ask that the Administration commit to ensuring that our nation's veterans are able to access critical medical services in a timely manner. To that end, we have introduced bipartisan legislation in both houses of Congress to authorize 24 Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) major medical facility leases in 15 states across the United States that have a combined population of more than 11 million veterans. These leases were evaluated and requested by the VA in the agency's FY 2016 and FY 2017 budgets, and funding has been included in previous appropriations legislation. A scorekeeping issue however, has prevented the Congressional authorizing committees from moving forward with these much-needed leases. We are writing to ask for your help in moving authorizing legislation to enactment. At stake is the health and quality of life for thousands of our nation's veterans.

The 24 leases will support facilities around the country, in the following cities:

Ann Arbor, Michigan
Birmingham, Alabama
Boston, Massachusetts
Charleston, South Carolina
Daytona Beach, Florida
Denver, Colorado
Gainesville, Florida
Hampton Roads, Virginia
Mission Bay, California
Missoula, Montana
Northern Colorado, Colorado
Ocala, Florida

Oxnard, California
Pike County, Georgia
Portland, Maine
Raleigh, North Carolina
Santa Rosa, California
Corpus Christi, Texas
Jacksonville, Florida,
Pontiac, Michigan
Rochester, New York
Tampa, Florida
Terre Haute, Indiana

Many of these leases will serve urgent needs in the veteran population for accessible, high-quality medical services. In numerous cases, the leases will greatly reduce veterans' commuting times for care or replace cramped and antiquated facilities with modern facilities that offer increased services, including expanded critical health care services. Some of the leases will consolidate multiple existing facilities, thereby reducing inefficiencies and simplifying veteran care. Finally, the facilities will address projected future growth in veteran demand for services.

The President's FY 2018 Budget Blueprint ("Blueprint") proposes to increase the VA's discretionary funding levels by six percent. The Blueprint states that this funding will be used "to improve patient access and timeliness of medical care services" and to "enable the Department to provide a broad range of primary care, specialized care, and related medical and social support services to enrolled veterans, including services that are uniquely related to veterans' health and special needs." The 24 leases authorized by our legislation would go a long way to achieving both of those goals.

We therefore ask for your assistance in moving toward completing projects that are critical to providing access to health care for veterans, often in rural communities. Specifically, we ask that the President's FY 2018 budget request assume authorization of, and fund, the 24 leases, and that the Administration send language to Congress that, if enacted, will authorize and fund the leases. We are confident that these actions will demonstrate the Administration's support for the leases, and the veteran populations they are meant to serve, and will help advance authorization of the leases in Congress.

We also ask that you partner with us in raising awareness about the need to bring about a permanent solution to the delays in authorizing VA major medical facility leases. Specifically, we would ask that you reach out to each of the Congressional offices that has a currently pending lease to ensure they are aware of the issue affecting veterans in their states and encourage them to work with us and Senate and House VA Committees to seek a permanent solution to the problem.

We appreciate your consideration of this request and look forward to working with you to ensure that veterans have access to the timely, high-quality health care they have earned through their service to this country.

Sincerely,



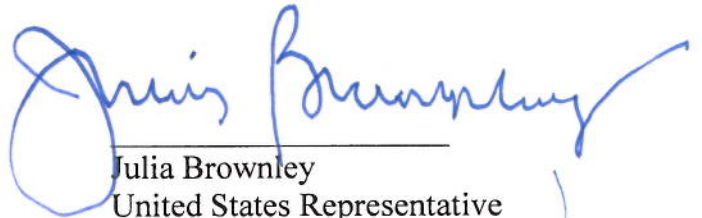
Susan M. Collins
United States Senator



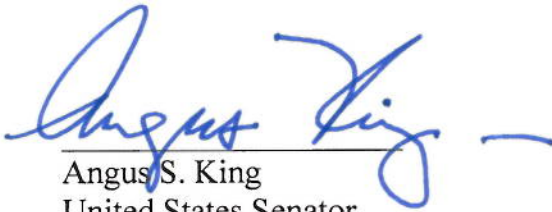
Mark R. Warner
United States Senator



Chellie Pingree
United States Representative



Julia Brownley
United States Representative



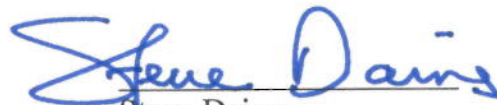
Angus S. King
United States Senator



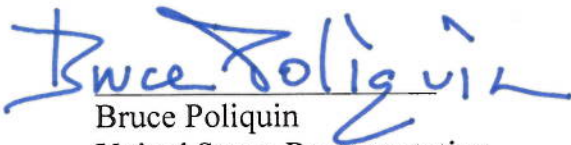
Richard Burr
United States Senator



Cory Gardner
United States Senator



Steve Daines
United States Senator

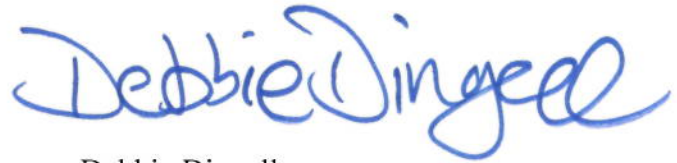


Bruce Poliquin
United States Representative

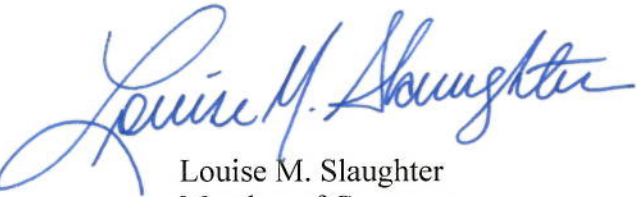
Jon Tester
United States Senator



David E. Price
Member of Congress



Debbie Dingell
Member of Congress



Louise M. Slaughter
Member of Congress



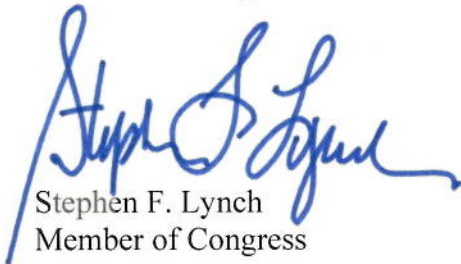
Terri A. Sewell
Member of Congress



Brenda L. Lawrence
Member of Congress



Blake Farenthold
Member of Congress



Stephen F. Lynch
Member of Congress



Ron DeSantis
Member of Congress



Al Lawson
Member of Congress



Diana DeGette
Member of Congress



Mike Thompson
Member of Congress