

JAIME HERRERA BEUTLER
3RD DISTRICT, SOUTHWEST WASHINGTON

COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LABOR, HEALTH AND
HUMAN SERVICES, EDUCATION
AND RELATED AGENCIES
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LEGISLATIVE BRANCH
SUBCOMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND
WATER DEVELOPMENT AND RELATED AGENCIES
U.S. JOINT ECONOMIC COMMITTEE



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-1602

□ 2352 RAYBURN HOB
WASHINGTON D.C. 20515
(202) 225-3536

□ GENERAL O.O. HOWARD HOUSE
750 ANDERSON STREET, SUITE B
VANCOUVER, WA 98661
(360) 695-6292

WWW.JHB.HOUSE.GOV

August 10, 2021

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

The Honorable Steven L. Lieberman
Deputy to the Deputy Under Secretary for Health

The Honorable Michael Tadych
Director of VA Puget Sound Health Care System

Dear Secretary McDonough, Deputy Under Secretary Lieberman, and Director Tadych,

Thank you for your work to serve veterans in Southwest Washington. Today, I write to inquire about the closure of the South Sound/Chehalis Community Outpatient Clinic, which serves 3,500 veterans. Providing accessible, quality, and consistent care to our military veterans is one of the most important services tasked to the federal government. A medical facility closure, particularly one that is geographically convenient for Lewis County veterans, can be a disruptive event for individuals who rely on frequent medical care. Given the consequential nature of this development, I ask that the Veterans Administration (VA) provide the affected community with complete transparency into why this decision was made, and a detailed plan for how the VA will ensure continuity of care for our veterans.

Many Southwest Washington military veterans and their caregivers have already contacted me to communicate strong concern that they will lose access to care. Some have expressed that they're worried about losing their current provider and do not want to start over with a new doctor. Others are worried about the longer commute to alternative facilities.

It is my understanding that a large portion of the 3,500 veterans who rely on the South Sound/Chehalis Community Outpatient Clinic will be transitioned to the new Olympia Clinic opening on August 16, 2021. For some of these individuals, that will lengthen the time it takes them to obtain care by 40-60 minutes, round trip. This will not only add increased commute times, but it will also add increased costs for veterans due to the rising price of gasoline.

Given the importance of ensuring that veterans access the same level of care after this closure, I request that the VA provide my office with answers to specific questions and information on assistance available to veterans outside of the Olympia area. Specifically:

- Did the VA explore options to hire an alternative contractor for the current facility? If so, please provide a summary of those efforts.
- What are your plans to provide the 3,500 impacted veterans with accurate information on what to expect in the coming months?
- How will the VA work with veterans to ensure they maintain the same level of care?
- What transportation options will be available to ensure continuity of care?
- Will veterans be able to keep their care providers once the facility is closed?

Our veterans have served our country honorably and it is our duty to provide them with the best care possible.

Thank you for your attention to this pressing matter and I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Jaime Herrera Beutler
Member of Congress