

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 11, 2005

Boston Study
VA CARES Studies
P.O. Box 1427
Washington Grove, MD 20880-1427

Dear Committee Members:

We are writing to comment on the options under consideration as part of the Boston CARES feasibility study. We appreciate the opportunity to enhance current VA services, and we look forward to working with you to address the needs of our veterans.

We all agree that we owe an enormous debt to the courageous men and women who have served our nation so well. We can't ignore their needs when they come home from war. The goal of the CARES process is something we all support: to "ensure veterans receive the right care, at the right time, at the right place...to objectively evaluate the best ways to provide quality health care and services to more veterans, in more locations, now and into the future...(and to)...optimize care delivery in terms of both quality and access." As you move forward with this study we urge you to remember those words as you develop your recommendations.

Specifically, we have serious concerns about the option to consolidate the four Boston area medical centers into one modern hospital in the Boston area. We certainly recognize that many of the current Boston facilities need improvement, but we do not believe that constructing a single new facility to take the place of the four hospitals is the right answer. It will be very difficult to identify a site in Boston that can be easily reached by public transportation, and the ability of veterans to do so must remain a top priority. Consolidating the services provided at Bedford, Brockton, Jamaica Plain and West Roxbury will cause a significant disruption in services and make it much more difficult for a large number of veterans to obtain care.

Additionally, with current federal budget restraints, we expect it will be very difficult to obtain the hundreds of millions of dollars in funds that will be needed to construct a state of the art facility in the Boston area if a site is identified. In light of the realities of the Boston real estate market the cost will be significant. We believe that maintaining and enhancing the facilities currently owned by the VA would be a better use of available funds to enhance both access and services.

We agree with the final CARES recommendation, which states that the mission at the Bedford hospital must not be changed. The hospital is well respected across the country for the quality of care it offers veterans throughout New England. By moving the services at the Bedford facility to another site, valuable programs would be at serious risk.

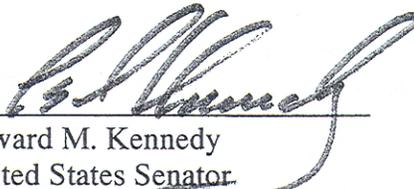
We also strongly urge you to maintain the services at the Causeway Street Outpatient Clinic. Closing the downtown Boston clinic will jeopardize the care that thousands of veterans

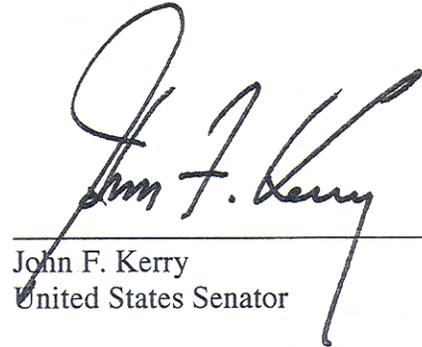
in the Boston area now can easily obtain. The clinic offers a broad range of primary care and specialty care, as well as laboratory, radiology, pharmacy, EMG, substance abuse and mental health services. Homeless veterans, disabled veterans and many other veterans struggling with difficult or chronic health conditions rely on the clinic because of its convenient location, and we are especially concerned that a significant portion of these veterans will be unwilling or even, unable, to travel to Jamaica Plain.

As always, we look forward to working closely with you to enable the VA to continue to provide its essential services to veterans in Massachusetts. We urge you to take our suggestions into consideration as you move forward with your study.

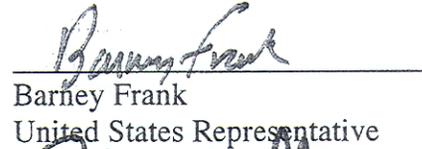
With respect and appreciation,

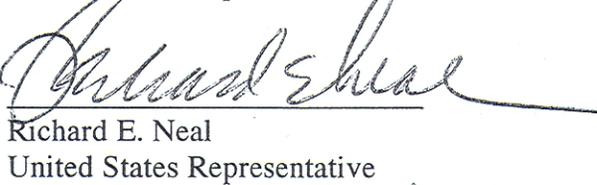
Sincerely,

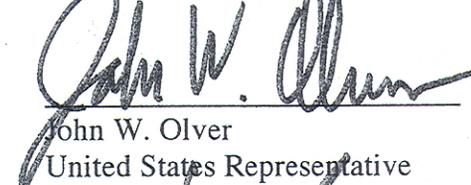

Edward M. Kennedy
United States Senator


John F. Kerry
United States Senator


Edward J. Markey
United States Representative

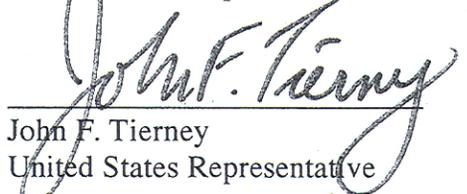

Barney Frank
United States Representative

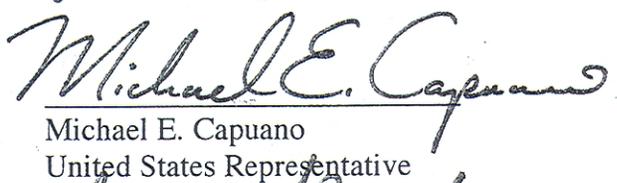

Richard E. Neal
United States Representative

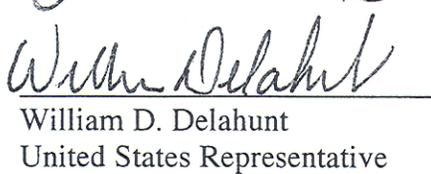

John W. Olver
United States Representative

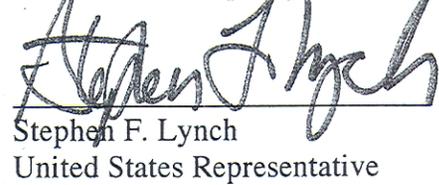

Martin T. Meehan
United States Representative


James P. McGovern
United States Representative


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William D. Delahunt
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