



December 30, 2015

William Mallison
Contract Investigator
Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee
House Committee on Veterans' Affairs
U.S. House of Representatives
335 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Mallison:

On behalf of the physician, resident and medical student members of the Kentucky Medical Association (KMA), I am writing to express concerns regarding the location of the new Robley Rex VA Medical Center (VAMC) planned for Louisville, Kentucky.

The Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) proposal to build the VAMC near the junction of Watterson Expressway and Brownsboro Road, also known as the Midlands location, does not adequately take into account the best interests of veterans and the physicians who provide their care. Specifically, a number of Community Based Outpatient Clinics face closure due to a lack of funding for currently existing leases. If this threat becomes a reality, veterans may have no other option than to receive such care from the nearest VA hospital, in this instance, the VAMC situated at the Midlands location. If so, veterans may be required to expend additional time, energy and resources in order to reach critical services.

Furthermore, the VAMC heavily relies on the commitment of numerous physicians, residents and students to provide care. Locating the VAMC at the Midlands seriously undermines, and possibly jeopardizes, the ability of those providers to serve our most deserving citizens. Alternatively, constructing the VAMC in closer proximity to a medical campus in downtown Louisville could prove more beneficial in providing high-quality, more coordinated and efficient care.

For these reasons, the KMA does not believe the Midlands is the optimal location for the VAMC.

Enclosed please find a resolution passed by the KMA House of Delegates regarding this matter as well as previous communication from KMA to the Department of Veterans' Affairs stating concerns regarding the VA's decision.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "G. Randolph Schrod, MD". The signature is written in a cursive, somewhat stylized script.

G. Randolph Schrod, MD
Chairman, Kentucky Medical Association Board of Trustees

Enclosure



January 2, 2014

The Honorable Eric K. Shinseki
Secretary of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Secretary Shinseki:

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has proposed to build a new regional hospital, the Robley Rex VA Medical Center (VAMC), in Louisville, Kentucky. The Kentucky Medical Association (KMA) would like to express its appreciation for this decision on behalf of approximately 7,000 member physicians, residents, and medical students, as well as the countless veterans that they serve on a daily basis.

However, the VA recently announced the purchase of land (the Midlands) near the junction of the Watterson Expressway and Brownsboro Road as the future building site for the VAMC, which is located in the Louisville suburbs. While there were a number of factors that went into the decision to locate the new hospital in the Midlands, the KMA has concerns regarding this location, as expressed by our membership at the most recent meeting of the KMA House of Delegates.

A number of Community Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs) face closure due to a lack of funding for currently existing leases. If this threat becomes a reality, veterans may have no other option than to receive such care from the nearest VA hospital, in this instance, the VAMC located at the Midlands. If so, veterans may be required to expend additional time, energy, and resources in order to reach critical services. Equally important, the geographic isolation of the VAMC from the downtown medical center and medical school impairs the availability of physicians, including specialists, to provide services to veterans. Hundreds of inpatient transfers occur between the current VAMC to downtown hospitals each year. These transfers are time sensitive and any additional time added to such transfers presents significant risks.

As an alternative, a location that is a closer proximity to the University of Louisville Medical Center in downtown Louisville might be more advantageous. Many VA hospitals across the country are located in urban settings in close proximity to university medical centers, including Emory University (Atlanta, GA), University of Cincinnati (Cincinnati, OH), Indiana University (Indianapolis, IN), Vanderbilt University (Nashville, TN), and University of Kentucky (Lexington, KY) to name a few. Personnel and support services for veterans are more accessible in a downtown location, which is more likely to have a greater impact on veteran health and quality of life.

Enclosed is the resolution passed by the KMA House of Delegates on this matter. KMA is grateful for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Fred A. Williams, Jr, MD
President, Kentucky Medical Association

Enclosure

RESOLUTION

Subject: Location of the New Louisville Regional Veterans Administration Medical Center
Submitted by: Greater Louisville Medical Society
Referred to: Reference Committee A

WHEREAS, the Veterans Administration has proposed to build a new Hospital in Louisville; and

WHEREAS, the Veterans Administration has purchased land near the junction of the Watterson Expressway and Brownsboro Road, known as the Midlands, as a proposed building site for the proposed VA Hospital; and

WHEREAS, with the closing of the Community Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOC) the Midlands location is even further away from most of the veterans using the CBOC; and

WHEREAS, the geographic isolation of the VA Hospital from the downtown medical center and medical school impairs the availability of physicians, including specialized physicians, to provide services to the veterans; and

WHEREAS, all veterans suffering from stroke, or requiring invasive cardiac care, are transported to other hospitals for that care and transport times can be critical to the outcome for veterans; and

WHEREAS, inpatient transfers from the current VA Hospital to downtown hospitals numbers in the hundreds every year (2011–470, 2012–423, 2013 to July 19–325); and

WHEREAS, the current VA Hospital relies on downtown hospitals for routine services during times of equipment failure, until replacement of faulty equipment, such as the failure of the autoclave that resulted in transfer of all elective surgery cases until it was replaced in 2012; and

WHEREAS, most VA Hospitals are located in downtown urban settings close to university hospitals including Atlanta (Emory), Cincinnati (Univ. of Cincinnati), Indianapolis (Indiana Univ.), Nashville (Vanderbilt Univ.), Lexington (Univ. of Kentucky), Memphis (Univ. of Tenn., Memphis), St. Louis (St. Louis Univ., Washington Univ.), East Tennessee (East Tennessee State Univ.), Cleveland (Case Western Univ.), Baltimore (Univ. of Baltimore),

Adopted as Amended

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Boston (Boston Univ., Harvard), Houston (Baylor Univ.), Chicago (Northwestern Univ.), Philadelphia (Univ. of Pennsylvania); and

WHEREAS, personnel and support services for Veterans are more accessible, and more likely to positively impact the health and quality of life of Veterans at a downtown location; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the KMA opposes the selected Midlands location for construction of a new Louisville Region VA Medical Center; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the KMA supports a location in close proximity to the University of Louisville Medical Center for the proposed VA Hospital.