

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

October 26, 2005

The Honorable James Nicholson
Secretary
Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Secretary Nicholson,

We are writing to express our view that it would be inappropriate to close either the Manhattan or Brooklyn Veterans Affairs Medical Centers. As you know, at the recommendation of the CARES Commission, PricewaterhouseCoopers (PWC) is engaged in a feasibility study that could lead to the elimination of one or both of these facilities. We believe that closing either hospital would be a serious mistake for the veterans who reside in our district. These hospitals provide outstanding quality of care to veterans, are conveniently located for the populations of veterans they serve and make exceptional use of the fine medical professionals at NYU and SUNY Downstate Medical Schools.

Accordingly, we join the Deans of New York University School of Medicine and SUNY Downstate College of Medicine in recommending that Business Plan Options BPO 1, BPO 6 and BPO 7 set forth in PWC's Stage I Summary Report and Appendix be the only options to be evaluated by PWC in Stage II of its study. The Deans express a willingness to work with PWC and the VA to piece together the best aspects of the three options to create a high quality, cost effective and accessible VA Health System that continues to provide outstanding care and research. We understand that the Local Advisory Panel voted to approve these three business plan options.

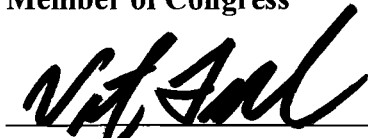
Dismantling either of the hospitals will seriously undermine the quality of health care in our region. Closing the Manhattan campus would sever the affiliation with NYU, which would be a tragic mistake. That affiliation is one of the primary reasons the Manhattan campus has been able to establish six centers of excellence, and the only prosthetics laboratory in the Northeast. Indeed, the VA has concluded that the Manhattan VA hospital's cardiac surgery program is the best in its national system. It would be extremely difficult for the VA to recruit new medical professionals to replace the world class physicians available to the Manhattan VA through its relationship with NYU. Similarly, the Brooklyn VA is a teaching center with well-established services and training programs in many specialties, including expertise in palliative care and radiation oncology. Its Radiation Oncology Service is fully equipped with both state-of-the-art brachytherapy and teletherapy services. The Brooklyn VA's proximity to Ft. Hamilton makes it perfectly situated to enter into sharing agreements with the Department of Defense (including TRICARE), as well as with various other federal agencies. In short, both hospitals are crucial to our communities, and the VA would lose more than it would gain by closing either one.

We hope the Veterans Administration and PWC will accept the recommendation of the Local Advisory Panel and will limit further evaluation to Business Plan Options BPO 1, BPO 6 and BPO 7. We believe this is the best way to ensure that veterans in our area continue to receive the highest quality health care in an accessible and cost effective manner.

Sincerely,



CAROLYN B. MALONEY
Member of Congress



VITO FOSSELLA
Member of Congress



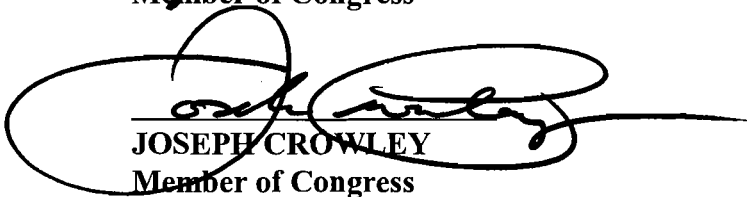
ANTHONY WEINER
Member of Congress



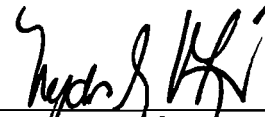
JERROLD NADLER
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