

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

July 16, 2020

Director Ann Brown
Atlanta VA Medical Center
1670 Clairmont Road
Decatur, Georgia 30033

Dear Director Brown,

Thank you for your ongoing coordination with our offices as we care for Georgia veterans during the COVID-19 pandemic. As members of the congressional delegation that represents Cobb County, we write to you today to advocate for women veterans in our districts and across the state of Georgia.

We are proud that so many veterans choose to make Georgia their home, and we recognize that the women veteran population in particular is poised to grow significantly in the coming years. The United States Census Bureau estimates that over 5,000 women veterans currently live in Cobb County¹, and the state of Georgia is projected to become home to over 100,000 women veterans within the next decade.² The Atlanta VA Medical Center has over 20,000 women veterans enrolled in care, more than any other VA Medical Center in the country. As such, we wish to ensure that the Multi-Specialty Clinic located at 1161 Bells Ferry Road in Marietta be equipped to provide appropriate health care tailored for women veterans.

The women who fought bravely to protect the freedoms of this country deserve to lead a healthy life and receive gender-specific care from a licensed medical professional. Local reports indicate that the new clinic in Cobb County “will provide specialty services including primary care, mental health, radiology, audiology, eye and dental.”³ Women’s health care services are not explicitly mentioned. A 2015 VA survey reports that 72% of women who use the VA system do not utilize the nearest VA facility for primary care, the most common reason being that women’s services are not provided.⁴

¹<https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=Cobb%20County,%20Georgia&g=0500000US13067&hidePreview=true&tid=ACSS5Y2018.S2101&table=S2101>

²https://www.va.gov/vetdata/docs/Demographics/New_Vetpop_Model/6L_VetPop2018_State.xlsx

³https://www.mdjonline.com/news/va-specialty-clinic-in-marietta-to-start-construction-this-year/article_234ec12c-a28f-11ea-9e6b-036f575fb5df.html

⁴https://www.womenshealth.va.gov/docs/Womens%20Health%20Services_Barriers%20to%20Care%20Final%20Report_April2015.pdf

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According to VHA Directive 1330.01 provided in an OIG report, the Department of Veterans Affairs, “is improving access, services, resources, facilities, and workforce capacity to make health care more accessible, more sensitive to gender-specific needs, and of the highest quality for the women Veterans of today and tomorrow.”⁵ The directive also states that the VA’s goal is to assign a Women’s Health Primary Care Provider to least 85% of women veterans⁵. In order to increase access to gender specific services for our women veterans, we ask that the Bells Ferry Road Clinic retain at least one full-time provider who has completed the Women’s Health Mini Residency Training program and the clinic be fully equipped to provide reproductive care and well woman examinations.

Making appropriate health care services accessible for women is critical in fulfilling the VA’s mission in serving all those who served America. Until last year, Cobb County was only serviced by one CBOC in Austell. While we are pleased with the addition of the Roswell Road CBOC in northeast Cobb County and encouraged by the beginning of construction on the Bells Ferry Road Clinic in June, we are keenly aware of the significant delays which occurred in the bidding process for the Bells Ferry Road Clinic. We are increasingly concerned by national reports of the length of time the Veterans Health Administration takes to acquire medical leases and build clinics in the community. A recent Office of the Inspector General report found that “VA major medical leases authorized by VACAA are approximately 22 months behind schedule on average.”⁶ Such delays ultimately impact veterans by limiting points of access to VA health care. Our veterans deserve better, and we look forward to your continued reports to our office with updates on the timely progress of this Multi-Specialty Clinic and all VA clinics in the metro Atlanta region.

Thank you again for your partnership in serving Georgia veterans. We look forward to your reply and continued engagement with our offices on the many ways we can continue to support the brave men and women who fought for this country.

Sincerely,



Lucy McBath
Member of Congress



David Scott
Member of Congress

⁵<https://www.va.gov/oig/pubs/VAOIG-17-02679-283.pdf>

⁶<https://www.va.gov/oig/publications/report-summary.asp?id=4655>