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**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
Washington, DC 20515-4317

February 24, 2016

The Honorable Robert A. McDonald  
Secretary  
Department of Veterans Affairs  
810 Vermont Avenue, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20420

Re: Proposed relocation of the Post-Traumatic Stress Residential Rehabilitation Program (PRRP) at the Doris Miller VA Medical Center in Waco, Texas.

Secretary McDonald:

I write to express my strong opposition to the pending decision within the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to relocate the Post-Traumatic Stress Residential Rehabilitation Program (PRRP) at the Doris Miller VA Medical Center in Waco, Texas, to the Olin E. Teague Veterans' Medical Center in Temple, Texas. The Doris Miller VA Medical Center serves as host to the VISN 17 Center of Excellence (CoE) for Research on Returning War Veterans that specifically utilizes the PRRP in their mission. Bifurcating the PRRP from the CoE for Veterans in Central Texas would negatively affect the quality and continuum of care for our Veteran community.

This pending effort to relocate the PRRP circumvents the will of Congress and is expressly contrary to the designation of the PTSD program and the mission for the VISN 17 CoE. In 2005, Congress made it quite clear in P.L. 109-114 that the Waco VAMC was to utilize its PTSD program and resources to be a research hub for the study of post-traumatic stress disorders and mental health issues for returning servicemembers. This report language can be found accompanying the FY2006 MIL-CON-QUAL-VA Appropriations Act (P.L.109-114):

Conference Report (H.Rept. 109-305), "Therefore, the conferees direct the Department of Veterans Affairs to place more emphasis on psychiatric care of our veterans by designating three centers of excellence to focus on mental health/ PTSD needs. These three centers will be established at Waco VAMC, Texas; San Diego VAMC, California; and the Canandaigua VAMC, New York."

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Senate Report (S. Rept.109–105), “The Committee understands that patients from facilities outside of Waco’s Veterans Integrated Service Network [VISN] are traveling to Waco on their own just to take advantage of Waco’s programs. The Committee is committed to supporting the Waco VAMC, and other such facilities across the country, and its role as a nationally renowned leader in psychiatric care. Therefore, the Committee directs the VA to place more emphasis on psychiatric care of our veterans by designating the Waco VAMC as a “Mental Health Center of Excellence,” as well as several others across the country the Secretary deems appropriate, and supporting them as such with the appropriate resources.”

Currently, the VISN 17 CoE in Waco has at least six on-going projects that continue to advance the knowledge and treatment for Veterans suffering from PTSD and mental health issues. Having the PTSD program co-located with the CoE provides the opportunity for the doctors, researchers, and, most importantly, patients to benefit from the immediate care and study to advance solutions for these issues. Any attempt to move the program without the consent of Congress would degrade the work being done by the CoE.

In this regard, I will be aggressively working with my colleagues in Congress to stop any such move or similar activity. Prior to any decision by the VA to attempt to move or modify the PRRP, I respectfully request a response to the following questions:

1. Is the VA considering moving the Waco PTSD Residential Rehabilitation Program to Temple? If so, what is the rationale behind the move?
2. What authority does the VA have to make this move without Congressional approval?
3. Given the potential impacts of the move on the CoE, was the VA considering notifying Congress and/or the Congressional Committees on Veterans’ Affairs of a potential move? If so, when?
4. What is the timeline for determining the program’s fate? Furthermore, if the VA attempts to move the PRRP, what is the timeline it plans to do so?
5. What is the impact of the move of the PRRP on the CoE’s research if it is moved? Furthermore, how will the VA investigate this impact?
6. How many patients of the PRRP will this directly affect?
7. How many Waco VA employees will be affected or displaced by a potential movement?

Again, I would like to express my deep concern about the attempt to move the PRRP and I expect that the VA will honor the intent of Congress by continuing to support the Posttraumatic Stress Residential Rehabilitation Program (PRRP) and the VISN 17 CoE at the Doris Miller VA Medical Center in Waco. I would respectfully request a response to this letter by March 16th, 2016.

Thank you for your assistance in this matter and I look forward to your response.

With great respect,



BILL FLORES  
United States Representative  
17th District of Texas

c: The Honorable Jeff Miller  
Chairman  
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