

The Honorable Anthony Brindisi

New York's 22nd Congressional District

**Testimony before the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Military Construction,
Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies**

Member Day Hearing on Appropriations for Fiscal Year 2020

As the Subcommittee on Military Construction, Veteran Affairs, and Related Agencies works to prepare the Fiscal Year 2020 Appropriations bill, I want to share with you my priorities, which I believe are of great importance to my District and our country. I know your Subcommittee receives many requests, and your consideration is greatly appreciated.

1.) Rome Lab Perimeter Security Military Construction

First, I'd like to urge the committee to fully support the Anti-Terrorism Perimeter Security/Entry Control Point military construction (MilCon) project at the Air Force Research Laboratory in Rome, New York. I am thankful that the committee recognized this project's importance by including the full \$14.2 million for the project in its FY 2019 appropriations. However, the Trump Administration's plan to redirect military construction funding toward the construction of a border wall places this important project at risk of being delayed or cancelled. I respectfully request that the committee protect the funding for the perimeter security project at Rome Lab to ensure that the project is not disrupted.

The Anti-Terrorism Perimeter Security/Entry Control Point MilCon project would include fencing, lighting, video surveillance, card-controlled personal entry access gates, and a visitor control entry point. Rome Lab conducts extremely sensitive research and development projects including cutting edge cyber, quantum computing, and counter-UAS research. The sensitive

work done at the lab places it at a higher risk, and ensuring these funds are appropriated will help directly to ensure the safety of over 3,000 employees against potential terrorist threats.

2.) Bainbridge, New York Community-Based Outpatient Clinic

Second, I urge the committee to include my requested language into the MilConVA FY20 bill.

My proposed language reads as follows:

“None of the funds provided to the Department of Veterans Affairs may be used to close the Community Based Outpatient Clinic in Bainbridge, New York until the Secretary of Veterans Affairs has completed and submitted a market area assessment and submitted it to the Committee on Appropriations.”

Several years ago, the leadership of the Albany VA Medical Center, which has jurisdiction over the Bainbridge CBOC, proposed to move the CBOC from Bainbridge, NY to Oneonta, NY or in neighboring Otsego County, as it felt that the veteran population utilizing the Bainbridge CBOC was more concentrated in Otsego County. When the contract between VA and the landlord of the Bainbridge CBOC building expired in December of 2018, the contract was renewed until 2020, with the VA having the option to opt out of the contract as long as notice is provided 90 days in advance.

Bainbridge and surrounding Chenango County are extremely rural, transportation and health care options are limited, and the population is aging. Over 3,600 veterans reside in Chenango County, and any potential move of the CBOC out of the Bainbridge area would have a tremendous impact on veterans and their families in having access to VA health care. I am very concerned

that if the Bainbridge clinic were to be closed and not replaced, veterans in the area would be underserved and forced to travel long distances to receive the care they have earned.

Section 106 of the VA MISSION Act requires that “Not less frequently than every 4 years, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall perform market area assessments regarding the health care services furnished under the laws administered by the Secretary”. Market area assessments are to include an assessment of the demand for health care in specific areas, health care provider capacity at each facility, and the capacity of community care networks to provide care. **The Albany VA plans to conduct a market assessment in 2020.**

Given the recent passage of the MISSION Act which includes the requirement of VA to conduct a market area assessment, I believe that the VA must use this assessment to inform any decision to move the Bainbridge clinic. I respectfully request that that the committee include my proposed language in the bill to ensure that VA is considering all the data and assessments available to them in making this decision. By including this language, we will ensure that any decision to move the CBOC will be based on an objective assessment that will lead to better access to care for veterans in the area.

Thank you for your consideration, and I am happy to answer any questions you may have.