

Rep. Veronica Escobar, TX-16

Thank you, Chairwoman Wasserman Schultz and Ranking Member Carter, for hosting this Member Day hearing.

I have the great privilege of representing El Paso, Texas, a proud border city that is home to an incredible veteran population and Fort Bliss. Today I want to discuss two of my requests for the subcommittee that are critical to our community.

The first request is regarding the construction of a new VA health center in El Paso. I would like to thank the subcommittee for allocating \$150 million dollars for this project in the Fiscal Year 2022 omnibus. That funding will be critical for concurrent design and early site development, including utilities and a central utility plant. I would respectfully ask the subcommittee to support the President's fiscal year 2023 budget request for the final \$550 million dollars that would be used for the actual construction of the health care center. The El Paso VA is critical to not only veterans in El Paso, but veterans in Southern New Mexico and much of West Texas. For years, the El Paso VA and the William Beaumont Army Medical Center have engaged in agreements that have benefited both facilities because they were located right next to each other. The completion of the new William Beaumont Army Medical Center across town presents an opportunity for the VA. This new health care center would allow the VA to provide a state-of-the-art facility that delivers quality care for our veterans, who deserve nothing less.

My second request is related to Fort Bliss. Fort Bliss is the second largest installation in the Army and serves as a critical Joint Mobilization Force Generation Installation. Since I came to Congress, I have advocated for Fort Bliss' infrastructure needs by speaking to and writing

letters to senior Department of Defense leadership. Among their most pressing needs are a new railhead and new permanent and transient party barracks. Unfortunately, the existing railhead is inadequate for the multiple missions and assets Fort Bliss supports and the barracks provide poor living conditions for servicemembers stationed there. While these priorities are not included in the Fiscal Year 2023 budget, I am heartened by a letter I received from the Assistant Secretary of the Army stating that there are investments slotted for Fort Bliss in the Army's Fiscal Year 2024-2028 investment plan. Additionally, I am encouraged by this year's budget request from the Department, which includes \$15 million dollars for a new fire station at Fort Bliss, specifically for the William Beaumont Army Medical Center. The medical center was built in a more remote location of Fort Bliss that does not have a fire station nearby and filling this request will dramatically increase the safety of the medical center. I see this request as the Department's first step towards modernizing Fort Bliss and I would respectfully ask the subcommittee to include funding for this project in your final bill for Fiscal Year 2023.

Thank you to the subcommittee for this opportunity and consideration of my requests.