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June 19th, 2019

The Honorable Mark Takano
Chairman
House Committee on Veteran Affairs
B234 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Dr. Phil Roe
Ranking Member
House Committee on Veteran Affairs
3460 O'Neil House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20024

We are writing you today to voice our strong opposition to H.R. 3083, the "AIR Acceleration Act," a bill that would authorize the Asset and Infrastructure Review Commission to begin its operations on an earlier schedule than that which was included in the VA Mission Act.

During the Mission Act debate our members voiced their concerns about how closing VA Facilities will erode patient care and the ability of the VA to meet veterans' health care needs.

We strongly believe that Congress should and must be the deciding factor when it comes to our brave warfighters and patriots that signed up to defend this nation's health care. That is why we resist the notion that these major decisions should be decided by a board of political appointees and not elected officials. To allow H.R. 3083 to become law would be a terrible abdication of responsibility on the part of Congress.

At a time when our veterans community faces unique challenges with their healthcare, we must not take away options. This bill will result in VA facilities leaving communities, taking with them a vital choice for our veterans. By losing the VA's world-class integrated healthcare system, their only choice will be private care.

More so, a BRAC-style closure does not result in cost savings. In particular, when healthcare provided in VA facilities is replaced by care purchased from providers in the private sector, costs will rise substantially. Costly and unaccountable private care does not meet the promises our nation has made to veterans.

The hundreds of thousands of veterans that we represent need and deserve a VHA that we can all be proud of, one that supports all veterans. H.R. 3083 does not do either. We urge you to work together to find ways to improve more access to VA facilities for veterans and ensure when a veteran has healthcare needs they have a fully staffed VA clinic or hospital in their community.

Sincerely,
William Attig
Executive Director
Union Veterans Council, AFL-CIO

