

Testimony of United States Congressman John L. Mica (FL-7) to U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Veterans Affairs' Health Subcommittee

H.R. 4056, to authorize VA to convey to the Florida Department of Veterans Affairs all right, title, and interest of the United States to the property known as "The Community Living Center" at the Lake Baldwin VA Clinic, Orlando, Florida.

Thank you Mr. Chairman and allow me to commend you for your leadership and tireless support of our nation's veterans.

Chairman Benishek, Ranking Member Brownley and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee, I come before you today in support of HR 4056, to authorize VA to convey to the Florida Department of Veterans Affairs all right, title, and interest of the United States to the property known as "The Community Living Center" at the Lake Baldwin VA Clinic, Orlando, Florida. Mr. Chairman, this Bill will transfer the nursing home facility on the campus of the Lake Baldwin VA Clinic to the State of Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs.

Since its opening in 1998, the Lake Baldwin VA Clinic has provided vital medical resources for Central Florida's Veterans population. With the opening of the Lake Nona VA Hospital complex, a new 120 bed Community Living Center (CLC) has been opened on that campus. In 2012, in anticipation of the vacating of the Lake Baldwin CLC, I wrote then VA Secretary Eric Shinsecki requesting that the re-use of that facility be considered and that we maintain the nursing home (CLC), which currently is being vacated. I would like to include for the record my correspondence with the VA regarding this matter. It is important to note that both Federal VA representatives and Florida VA officials have met and agreed to the re-use of the facility as a CLC and hope to do so in an expedited manner. We have reached an agreement with the Florida Department of Veterans Affairs to have them operate the facility, and both federal and state agencies support this arrangement.

Besides vastly expediting the restart operations of this facility with this transfer, a significant cost savings will be realized to the federal taxpayer. The State of Florida Department of Veterans Affairs has a proven track record of efficiency and service and will provide our region's veterans with the care they so richly deserve. To make this a reality and to make the project viable, included in the Bill is a waiver of the "small home" design requirement outlined by the VA. This waiver will allow for the current 120-bed unit to remain a double-occupancy unit as currently constructed.

Again, let me thank Chairman Benishek, Ranking Member Brownley and the distinguished Subcommittee Members for your support of this legislation. H.R. 4056 will help fulfill the promises we have all made to our men and women in uniform as we continue to provide the health care and services owed to them now and in the future.