

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20510**

April 20, 2015

The Honorable Robert McDonald  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs  
810 Vermont Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20420

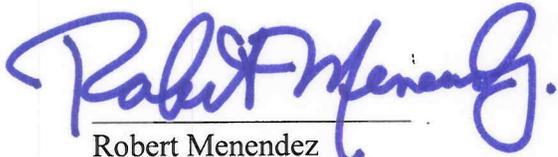
Dear Secretary McDonald:

We are writing with regard to reports of longer than average appointment wait times at the VA Clinic in Vineland, New Jersey and an apparent doctor shortage at the VA Medical Center in East Orange, New Jersey. While the wait times in East Orange are below the national average, we are concerned that a shortage of doctors could be causing unnecessary delays for veterans seeking care at the most heavily-utilized VA facility in New Jersey. In the interest of furthering our mutual goal of ensuring that New Jersey's veterans receive the prompt, high quality healthcare they deserve, we respectfully request a briefing on the VA's plan to alleviate this doctor shortage and eliminate lengthy wait times at all New Jersey facilities. While reports indicated that VA facilities have been authorized to hire additional medical personnel, we would expect the briefing to provide details on timeline for hiring and locations that would receive additional personnel.

We would also like to raise a concern brought to our attention by New Jersey veterans who have been unable to receive equal access to a benefit provided for by a provision of the Veterans' Access, Choice and Accountability Act of 2014, which allows for veterans to receive healthcare at non-VA facilities if they live more than 40 miles from an existing VA facility. While this provision, and a recent rule adjustment made by the VA allowing for an "as the crow flies" exception to the 40-mile rule are certainly laudable, it unfortunately does not help thousands of New Jersey veterans who live within 40 miles of a VA facility that does not offer the type of medical care they may need. While veterans in many other states now enjoy the full range of access to local healthcare, it is simply not reasonable to force a New Jersey veteran to travel hundreds of miles for care simply because the nearby VA facility does not offer the full range of specialty services the veteran might need. We strongly urge the VA to consider further regulatory adjustments to correct this arbitrary and unequal treatment of New Jersey veterans.

Thank you for your attention to these matters.

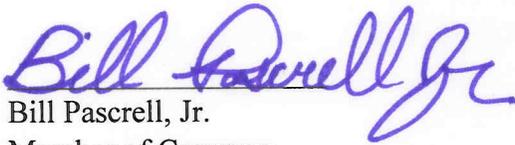
Sincerely,



Robert Menendez  
United States Senator



Cory A. Booker  
United States Senator



Bill Pascrell, Jr.  
Member of Congress



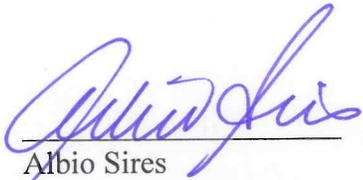
Frank LoBiondo  
Member of Congress



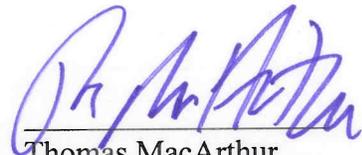
Scott Garrett  
Member of Congress



Leonard Lance  
Member of Congress



Albio Sires  
Member of Congress



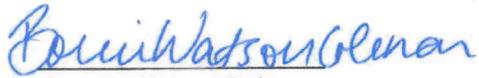
Thomas MacArthur  
Member of Congress



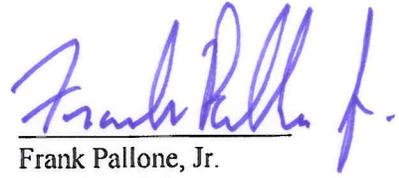
Donald Norcross  
Member of Congress



Donald M. Payne, Jr.  
Member of Congress



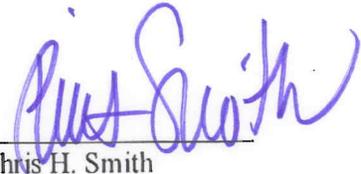
Bonnie Watson Coleman  
Member of Congress



Frank Pallone, Jr.  
Member of Congress



Rodney P. Frelinghuysen  
Member of Congress



Chris H. Smith  
Member of Congress