August 19, 2021

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| Secretary Mary Lou SuddersMassachusetts Executive of Office of Health and Human ServicesOne Ashburton Place11th FloorBoston, MA 02108 | Secretary Cheryl Lussier PoppeMassachusetts Department of Veterans’ Services600 Washington Street7th FloorBoston, MA 02111 |

Dear Secretary Sudders and Secretary Poppe,

On May 25, 2021, Governor Baker signed legislation authorizing bond financing for the Holyoke Soldiers’ Home providing $400 million for the construction of a facility in Holyoke and an additional $200 million for establishing regional equity and ready access to community services for veterans throughout the Commonwealth who do not live proximate to the Holyoke or Chelsea facilities.

We are writing to advocate two activities be undertaken to ensure that state-of-the-art services are developed and available for veterans throughout the Commonwealth utilizing the $200 million component of the funding authorization intended for regional equity.

First, a comprehensive demand analysis should be commissioned as soon as possible to determine the current and future needs of veterans and their families for long-term services, supports, and care throughout all parts of the Commonwealth and their preferences for how and where the services and care are provided.

Second, a planning process actively involving veterans, their families, and persons with expertise in providing long-term services, supports, and care should be initiated. The planning process should consider the results of the demand study as well as the analysis contained in the GAO report, *Veterans' Use of Long-Term Care Is Increasing, and VA Faces Challenges in Meeting the Demand* [<https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-20-284>]. It should also utilize the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs’ *Small House (SH) Model Design Guide* [<https://www.cfm.va.gov/til/dGuide/dgSHModel.pdf>] which describes in detail the Veteran Administration’s vision for the future development and operations of care centers for veterans throughout the country.

Additionally, we recognize that the planning process for the replacement of the Holyoke Soldiers’ Home on the campus is at an advanced stage and that changes may be difficult to consider at this point in the process. However, as opportunities to offer recommendations for modifications and alternatives may arise, we are prepared and willing to provide input.

We are also aware of the proposal to reform the governance structure involved with the operation of the two Soldiers’ Homes. We believe the proposed changes are fully consonant with the vision of creating and operating a twenty-first century system of services, support, and care for all of today’s Massachusetts veterans and for those in the decades ahead.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

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Tom Lyons, Chairman, Soldiers’ Home in Chelsea Board of Trustees