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March 26, 2026

The Honorable Douglas A. Collins
Secretary
Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Secretary Collins:

I urge you to conduct a strategic market analysis for establishing a full-service, Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) hospital in Florida's First Congressional District and to assess whether existing Community Care (CC) guidelines and operational results are meeting the needs. For veterans seeking inpatient and other specialty care in my district, their options are to travel nearly two to three hours one way to receive treatment at a VA hospital, including facilities such as the VA hospital in Biloxi, Mississippi, or, when deemed eligible, to seek care through the CC program at a private facility. For those unable to obtain CC, nearly two-thirds or approximately 140,000 individuals in the VA service area covering my district must travel great distances for same-day surgeries or acute inpatient care. This figure represents the largest number anywhere in the country in the last assessment. Due to provider shortages, a lack of specialists, as well as administrative delays, I am concerned veterans are unable to receive timely inpatient and other specialty care in the Florida Panhandle from the VA or CC providers.

Recognizing this deficiency, the Department of Veterans Affairs previously recommended building a full-service, VA hospital in my district. For my constituents, these realities delay necessary care and burden our veterans, especially older individuals and those with complex medical needs who lack local inpatient and specialty care options in the Florida Panhandle.

A strategic market analysis would help determine whether the VA is adequately positioned to meet the region's growing veterans' healthcare needs, would provide valuable insight into how existing and planned resources can meet these growing demands, and would ensure veterans continue to receive timely, comprehensive, and high-quality healthcare.

Our veterans made tremendous sacrifices for our country. I look forward to working with you throughout this process to ensure these heroes have access to the care and support available to veterans across the country. Thank you and I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Jimmy Patronis
Member of Congress