



Lt Gen Dana T. Atkins, USAF (Ret)
President and CEO

April 7, 2016

Ms. Nancy Schlichting
Chairperson, VA Commission on Care
1575 I Street, NW, Suite 240
Washington, DC 20005

Dear Ms. Schlichting,

On behalf of the more than 390,000 members of the Military Officers Association of America (MOAA) and their families, I'm writing to thank the Commission for your transparency and ongoing engagement with veteran service organizations (VSO) over the past several months. I am particularly grateful for your willingness to allow MOAA and our VSO colleagues to meet in person with commissioners this month to discuss, in more detail, the Commission's work and potential recommendations for your final report.

In your final weeks of deliberation, I urge you to further consider and incorporate Secretary McDonald's "MyVA" and his *Plan for Consolidating Care in the Community* in the final report. A tremendous amount of progress has been made by the Secretary and his team through "MyVA" and plans to consolidate community care efforts.

Furthermore, the important and thoughtful work of our Independent Budget (IB) partners (Disabled American Veterans, Paralyzed Veterans of America and the Veterans of Foreign Wars), in producing *A Framework for Veterans Health Care Reform* concept paper parallels much of the work the Secretary and his team have undertaken. The Secretary and IB efforts are substantial, and in our view, provide the best path for building a health system veterans and their families desire and deserve.

As you know, MOAA strongly supports the preservation of the VA health system. The Veterans Health Administration (VHA) is a system with a unique and comprehensive mission of meeting the needs of those who have borne the battle — an enterprise — unlike that of any other health system in America today.

VHA's pillars of care, which include clinical, training and research, are essential components to delivering high quality health care to veterans. This integrated

system of care, according to RAND's recent *Balancing Demand and Supply for Veterans' Health Care* report, continues to provide the quality of care generally equal to, if not better than, care delivered in the private sector on most quality measures.

Regardless of what the system of care will look like in the future, MOAA believes the key elements of a health system veterans and their families and caregivers value most include high quality, accessible, comprehensive, integrated, and veteran-centric care — a system that is simple, easy to both understand and navigate, and is seamless, whether the care is delivered in-house or in the community.

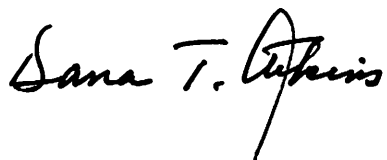
MOAA does not believe the VHA is broken; rather, we see the system in need of immediate attention and reform. Fixing systemic issues such as access to care, eligibility standards, and other operational weaknesses identified by GAO should be top priorities and will lead to improving and enhancing VA health care and patient outcomes.

We are concerned that migrating the current system to community-based services where VA is only the payer for care and phasing out VA facilities over the next 20 years, as some have suggested, would eliminate some of the best aspects of VA care, such as spinal and polytrauma care, and could produce unintended consequences, such as a reduction in benefits and/or negative health care outcomes. In MOAA's view, the Secretary's "MyVA" coupled with the IB's concept will lead to a more successful integration of community care and ultimately a better veterans' health system in the long run.

I look forward to a productive discussion when we meet this month. Your task is a difficult one, and we stand by to assist in any way possible as you finalize your recommendations. My staff point of contact is Commander Rene Campos, U.S. Navy (Ret.), MOAA Government Relations Deputy Director, and may be reached directly at 703-838-8134 or via email at ReneC@moaa.org.

I am confident we can find common ground in transforming VA health and benefits systems while remaining veteran-centric.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sara T. Atkins". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping tail on the letter "s" at the end.