Legislation Details (With Text)

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Title: Resolution calling upon the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to keep the Veterans Hospitals open, including the Brooklyn site of the New York Harbor VA Health Care System.

Sponsors:

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Res. No. 1224

Resolution calling upon the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to keep the Veterans Hospitals open, including the Brooklyn site of the New York Harbor VA Health Care System.

By Council Members Vann, Addabbo Jr., Barron, Boyland, Brewer, Fidler, Foster, Gennaro, Gentile, Gerson, Gonzalez, James, Liu, McMahon, Monserrate, Nelson, Palma, Sanders Jr., Sears, Yassky and Jackson

Whereas, With the United States currently engaged in military operations in both Iraq and Afghanistan, the ability of our returning veterans to access quality health care is of the utmost importance; and

Whereas, In New York City, many veterans receive their medical care from the Brooklyn and Manhattan Veterans Affairs Hospitals; and

Whereas, The Brooklyn and Manhattan Veterans Affairs Hospitals have merged to form the Veterans Affairs New York Harbor Healthcare System; and

Whereas, According to officials from State University of New York Downstate Medical Center ("SUNY Downstate"), this merger has already resulted in millions of dollars of savings for the VA health care system;

and

Whereas, According to SUNY Downstate, the Brooklyn VA Hospital site, which is affiliated with SUNY Downstate, serves a large catchment area that includes all of Kings County, all of Staten Island, much of Queens County and even parts of New Jersey and Nassau County; and

Whereas, SUNY Downstate officials state that the Brooklyn VA Hospital site, in approximate numbers, annually treats 30,000 patients, admits 4,900 patients, performs 2,300 surgical procedures, accommodates 310,000 out-patient visits, funds 119 residents in training and has some 350 rotating residents and 75 students; and

Whereas, The Brooklyn VA Hospital site offers state of the art primary, specialty and nursing home services; and

Whereas, The Veterans Administration (the "VA") has empanelled a Capital Asset Realignment for Enhanced Services Commission (the "Cares Commission"), which has been asked to "identify the optimal approach to provide veterans with healthcare equal to or better than is currently provided in terms of access, quality and cost effectiveness"; and

Whereas, The September 19, 2005 Cares Commission report, entitled Business Plan Studies for Brooklyn and Manhattan Veterans' Affairs Medical Centers ("Business Plan"), states that the VA is studying the feasibility and cost-effectiveness of consolidating the Brooklyn and Manhattan Veterans Affairs Medical Centers; and

Whereas, The Business Plan provides nine future options for the Brooklyn and Manhattan sites; and

Whereas, A number of these options would, if implemented, result in either the closing of the Brooklyn VA Hospital site, or a significant consolidation or reduction of services offered at this site; and

Whereas, The Dean of the New York University School of Medicine (the "Dean") has stated that the closing of either campus of the Veterans Affairs New York Harbor Healthcare System would be incompatible with access and quality of care; and

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Whereas, The Dean also stated that the U.S. General Accounting Office has released a study that found that the VA had utilized an inadequate forecast model when attempting to project future demand for the health care services offered through the VA system; and

Whereas, A number of the Chairs (the "Chairs") of medical departments at SUNY Downstate have written to the CARES project demanding that the VA maintain a full tertiary medical center at Brooklyn VA Hospital site; and

Whereas, The Chairs maintain that eliminating the Brooklyn VA Hospital site will without question have a profoundly negative impact on their patients' ability to obtain the care they need in a timely manner; and

Whereas, The Chairs also state that closure of the Brooklyn VA Hospital site would inevitably lead to the withdrawal of the support for the VA by the medical schools currently affiliated with this hospital, and thus an inevitable decline in the quality of care; and

Whereas, According to the Chairs, the withdrawal of this affiliation would also have a negative effect on a graduate medical education program that has trained a significant number of minority physicians; and

Whereas, The closure of the Brooklyn campus would, according to the Chairs, also lead to the elimination of vital research programs that have served to enhance the health and welfare of veterans; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York calls upon the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to keep the Veterans Hospitals open, including the Brooklyn site of the New York Harbor VA Health Care System.

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PS
LS# 3574
10/17/05