



**LOUISE M. SLAUGHTER**  
CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES  
25TH DISTRICT, NEW YORK

September 24, 2014

The Honorable Robert McDonald  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs  
810 Vermont Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20420

Dear Secretary McDonald:

I write to express my concerns regarding the absence of acute psychiatric beds at the Canandaigua VA Medical Center.

Information obtained through a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request and provided to my office by the Finger Lakes Veterans Advocacy Council, a local veterans advocacy organization, revealed that 172 veterans were transferred for acute psychiatric care from the Canandaigua and Rochester VA mental health clinics to Albany, Syracuse, and Buffalo acute psychiatry inpatient units in Fiscal Year 2013. The FOIA release also revealed that the average inpatient length of stay at these facilities for acute psychiatric care admissions was 10.45 days for those veterans during this period of time.

I do not believe veterans should have to seek mental health care services so far from their families and home communities, especially at a time of significant stress and adversity. I understand the VA is working on contract proposals for acute psychiatric beds near the Canandaigua VA for veterans to be delivered in 18 months. Unfortunately, I believe that is too long of a delay for the veterans who need this service. I urge the VA to work to expedite the contracting process to bring these acute psychiatric beds to Canandaigua.

Additionally, I request the VA establish a planning committee to determine the need for and possible construction of VA Acute Psychiatric facilities in Rochester to coincide with the construction of the VA's new Community Based Outpatient Clinic in Rochester.

After a decade at war and given the increasing rates of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) seen in returning service members, it is more important than ever that the VA focus its resources and efforts to address the mental health needs of our veterans. I know you share this commitment to our nation's veterans

and I am proud to work with you on their behalf. Thank you for your time and consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Louise M. Slaughter". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "L" and a long, sweeping underline.

Louise M. Slaughter  
Member of Congress