



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Liz Krueger

## Testimony Before The Assembly Standing Committees On Veterans' Affairs And Health Regarding The VA Hospital In Manhattan on November 6, 2003

LIZ KRUEGER July 12, 2010

Good morning. I am State Senator Liz Krueger. I represent the 26<sup>th</sup> Senate District, which includes Midtown, East Midtown, and the Upper East Side. I am testifying today in opposition to the proposal for substantial service reductions at the Veterans' Administration (VA) Hospital in Manhattan. The CARES Commission has recommended the study of transferring all acute care from Manhattan to the Brooklyn VA Hospital in Bay Ridge, and moving a substantial part of outpatient services to other facilities in the Bronx and East Orange. These changes would severely compromise service for veterans and their families living in Manhattan and Queens. I am also concerned that if these changes are implemented, the ultimate result will be the closure of the Manhattan VA Hospital, which will no longer be providing enough services to adequately utilize its facility.

The VA Hospital in Manhattan is recognized as one of the best VA Hospitals in the country. With 1.3 million veterans in the NY Metropolitan region, the Manhattan VA Hospital currently has a waiting list for patients seeking to use its services. People travel to the Manhattan VA Hospital from as far away as Philadelphia, because of the high quality of care it provides. The VA Hospital is also conveniently located in an area known as "bedpan alley" - a concentration of hospitals on the East Side of Manhattan. This location has allowed the VA Hospital to develop strong professional and academic relationships with surrounding institutions and their physicians to the benefit of VA patients. Our veterans deserve the best medical care possible, and thanks to the relationships the VA in Manhattan has developed with its neighboring institutions, veterans can receive the highest quality care. This relationship also benefits the surrounding hospitals as the VA is in a position to work together with these institutions on a variety of health care issues.

Not only is the care at the Veterans Hospital in Manhattan first rate, but it is also easily accessible, located near several bus and subway lines. This is extremely important for veterans with disabilities, who

make up a large portion of the population served by the hospital. In contrast, the Brooklyn VA is two miles from the nearest subway stop, and is much harder to reach not only for veterans who live in Manhattan, but also Queens residents, who will have to travel through Manhattan to reach the Brooklyn VA by subway. There are no accessible subway stops anywhere near the Brooklyn facility, making access for people with disabilities even more difficult

The Veterans' Administration's regional administration, Veteran Integrated Service Network 3, has indicated that the VA Hospital in Manhattan should remain open, due to existing demand and the complexities of transportation in the New York City metropolitan region. The CARES plan ignores this recommendation from those in the VA most familiar with the needs of veterans in the New York region.

During this period when we are once again asking our armed forces to make incredible sacrifices, it would be unconscionable to reduce services for those who have served our country. Veterans deserve access to the best possible care, and the VA Hospital in Manhattan has provided them with such care. Reducing services or closing this facility would undermine the health and safety of veterans in the New York region. I strongly urge you to make clear your opposition to the CARES commission proposals regarding the VA Hospital in Manhattan.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify here today.