

AFL-CIO

LEGISLATIVE ALERT

May 15, 2018

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the AFL-CIO, I am writing to express our opposition to the VA Mission Act (S.2372), legislation that would give the VA Secretary new authority to privatize and close facilities throughout the VA health care system. While we support the expansion of the Caregiver Program to all veterans disabled in past and present conflicts, we view the bill's expansion of the VA Choice program as a giant misstep toward privatization and we also oppose provisions that would diminish the role of Congress in making key decisions about the VA's infrastructure.

Primary care is the core of the VA's integrated health system, and it should remain in the VA, with only limited exceptions and tight eligibility requirements. When going outside of the VA is medically necessary, private providers should be held to the same standards of quality and accountability as their VA counterparts and treated with the same oversight and regulations as other government contractors. Unfortunately, by expanding the VA Choice program instead of providing the resources necessary to maintain the VA's role as the primary provider of medical care to veterans, S.2372 fails on both accounts.

We also believe that using a commission modeled after the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) commission to evaluate the VA's infrastructure is not the right way to address the VA's needs. This proposal not only diminishes the vital role our elected representatives have in safeguarding the VA medical system, it also gives the commission even broader authority than many prior military BRACs.

Congress should be investing more in the VA, not privatizing and downsizing it. Veterans and the dedicated employees who serve them deserve no less.

Sincerely,



William Samuel, Director
Government Affairs Department

American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations

815 16th St., N.W. • Washington, D.C. 20006 • 202-637-5000 • www.aflcio.org

RICHARD L. TRUMKA
PRESIDENT

ELIZABETH H. SHULER
SECRETARY-TREASURER

TEFERE GEBRE
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT