



City of Northampton

MASSACHUSETTS

In the City Council, May 5 2022

Upon the Recommendation of Mayor Gina-Louise Sciarra, Councilor Jamila Gore, Councilor Marianne LaBarge, and Councilor Rachel Maiore

R-22.103

RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF THE EDWARD P. BOLAND DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS MEDICAL CENTER IN LEEDS, MA

WHEREAS, America's Veterans have sacrificed their safety and well-being to serve our country and community and deserve our utmost support and respect;

WHEREAS, the United States Veterans Bureau opened a neuropsychiatric and medical hospital at 421 Main Street in Leeds on what is known as Bear Hill in May 1924 to fulfill our nation's sacred obligation to care for Veterans and in a manner described by then President Calvin Coolidge of Northampton as "no duty imposed upon us of greater importance than prompt and adequate care of our disabled."; and

WHEREAS, the City of Northampton has nurtured its relationship over these many years with the federal government to ensure the medical staff in Leeds receives the best support and is today proud of the thousands of Northampton residents who, since 1924, have served on the grounds of the Edward P. Boland Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center and in all capacities in providing the highest standard of care and services to Veterans and beneficiaries; and

WHEREAS, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs in Washington D.C. in March 2022 announced its recommendations to the federal Asset and Infrastructure Review (AIR) Commission to close the VA Medical Center in Leeds, a deeply flawed recommendation that is not based on the current and significant demonstrated needs of our Veterans and is in no way consistent with the VA's own core values of integrity, commitment, advocacy, respect, and excellence; and

WHEREAS, any reduction in services on the VA Leeds campus will have a profoundly negative impact on the more than 80,000 Veterans who live in our rural region of central and western Massachusetts, forcing Veterans to travel further and jeopardizing the care

they have come to expect and deserve from the VA medical center closest to where they live; and

WHEREAS, \$100 million has already been invested in the VA Medical Center over the past decade in a large, multi-faceted expansion and renovation project with local construction contractors and other community craftspeople investing their labor to maximize the VA Leeds's existing facilities, enabling it to continue as a center of excellence for Veteran mental health for all in New England, an ongoing evolution described by VA leaders as transformational and an investment for generations to come; and

WHEREAS, to this end, the VA Medical Center offers Veterans the following services, in alphabetical order; Addiction and substance abuse care, Audiology and speech, Blind and low vision rehabilitation, Cardiology, COVID-19 vaccines, Caregiver support, Dental/oral surgery, Dermatology, Diabetic care, Homeless Veteran care, Infectious disease, LGBTQ+ Veteran care, Laboratory and pathology, MOVE! Weight Management, Mental Health care, Minority Veteran care, Neurology, Nutrition, food and dietary care, Ophthalmology, Orthopedics, PTSD care, Patient advocates, Pharmacy, Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, Podiatry, Primary care, Psychiatry, Pulmonary Medicine, Radiation Oncology, Radiology, Rehab and Extended care, Returning Service member care, Smoking and tobacco cessation, Social work, Suicide prevention, Surgery, Telehealth, Urology, Vocational rehabilitation and employment programs, Whole Health, Women's Veteran care, all in one location; and

THEREFORE, let it be resolved that the City of Northampton strongly urges the federal government to continue to allow the Edward P. Boland VA Medical Center to provide the accessible, quality healthcare and services our Veterans deserve and calls on President Biden and the United States Congress to defeat any attempt to close the Edward P. Boland VA Medical Center or any move towards the privatization of our Veterans' health care.

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Administrative Assistant to the City Council shall cause a copy of this Resolution to be sent to President Joseph Biden, VA Secretary of Veterans Affairs Denis McDonough, Senator Elizabeth Warren, Senator Edward Markey, Representative Jim McGovern and the Chairs of the United States Senate and House committees on Veterans Affairs, Senator Jon Tester, Representative Mark Takano, Central Hampshire Veterans' Services Director Steven J. Connor, VA Central Western Massachusetts Medical Center Director Duane B. Gill Fache.

In City Council, May 19, 2022
Adopted in Final Reading on Roll Call Vote of 8 Yes, 0 No, 0 Absent, 1 Recused (Councilor Foster)

Attest: *Laura Krutger*, Clerk of Council

Passed final reading and enrolled.
I hereby certify that the above Resolution was adopted by the Northampton City Council on May 19, 2022

Approved: Gina-Louise Sciarra, Mayor

Gina-Louise Sciarra, Mayor approved the Resolution on May 24, 2022

Attest: *Laura Krutger*, Clerk of Council