

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-3205

February 19, 2025

The Honorable Doug Collins
Secretary
United States Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Secretary Collins,

I write to express my concern regarding the recent closure of the 20-bed acute inpatient unit at Castle Point VA Medical Center (VAMC) in Dutchess County, New York. My office has been informed that this critical medical unit was temporarily closed on February 1st as the Castle Point VAMC “re-evaluate[s] staffing needs” for 120 days. However, the abrupt closure of the acute inpatient unit will have devastating consequences for those veterans seeking detoxification and substance abuse care. Castle Point provides care to over 7,000 veterans who have served our country with bravery and honor. Losing this dedicated medical unit for Hudson Valley veterans risks worse health outcomes for some of our most at-risk veterans in need of specialized substance abuse care. I urge the VA to immediately re-open this medical unit to meet the acute needs of these veterans while continuing to conduct its 120-day review at the Castle Point VAMC.

I am deeply concerned by the VA’s lack of communication and transparency regarding its decision to close the Castle Point VAMC’s acute inpatient unit. It is my understanding that the VA not only closed the medical unit without warning, but also failed to provide adequate guidance or support to the local community. While I recognize the need to evaluate the efficiency of its resources and the quality of its services, the VA should have undertaken this assessment while continuing to offer these important services to veterans in the Hudson Valley. Therefore, I request a written response by February 28, 2025, to address the following questions, concerns, and recommendations:

1. Please provide a detailed explanation of the VA’s decision to temporary close the unit, as well as data on the usage rate of the Castle Point VAMC’s acute inpatient unit.
2. Please provide details regarding your plan to distribute guidance and assistance to Hudson Valley veterans regarding how they can obtain comparable access to lifesaving care while the unit remains closed. Comprehensive information about alternative forms of care in the Hudson Valley through Community Care and other VA sites in New York State, as well as transportation logistics and travel pay reimbursement, should be shared with local veterans and their caregivers, municipal veteran service agencies, and veterans support and advocacy organizations.

3. Please reopen the acute inpatient unit at the Castle Point VAMC while the evaluation of staffing needs is ongoing.
4. Please provide the alternative options to closure being considered and your evaluation of those options, including the feasibility and advisability of adjusting the number of beds to meet the demonstrated need for medical detoxification and substance abuse care at the Castle Point VAMC.
5. Please ensure that future decisions regarding changes to healthcare service provision at VA facilities in New York are communicated publicly with advance notice and allow for community input.

Sincerely,



Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator