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April 9, 2020

Senator Mark Warner  
703 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington DC 20510

Senator Tim Kaine  
231 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Kaine and Senator Warner,

On behalf of the Virginia Council of Chapters (VCOC) of the Military Officers Association of America (MOAA), I'm writing to urge legislation in the FY21 NDAA to suspend planned downsizing of military hospitals and clinics. Accounting for the COVID-19 pandemic and the unprecedented demands on the Military Health System (MHS) associated in national response, the intended medical billet cuts and military treatment facility (MTF) restructuring should be halted at this time.

When our nation requires assistance our military provides said assistance on an immediate basis. In response to the coronavirus crisis, our Navy hospital ships, to include the USNS Comfort (T-AH 20) deployment from Norfolk to New York, are providing further capacity to coastal cities. In addition, Army medical personnel from Fort Campbell, Ky., Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Wash., and Fort Hood, Texas, are now on duty in New York City and Seattle. Further, Department of Defense leadership Pentagon leaders announced U.S. Navy medical deployment of expeditionary medical teams to New Orleans and Dallas.

Response to the COVID crisis requires a level beyond the current capacity of the MHS, which is simultaneously providing health care to service members, military families, retirees and other survivors. Over to the Veterans Administration, the VA is not in a position to mobilize to the extent the Coronavirus pandemic mandates. It is a fixed infrastructure, in contrast to the military, which maintains and expeditionary and deployable capability. To the aforementioned, an increased DoD medical capacity, in both terms of personnel and capability, is most warranted.

Note that the Defense Health Agency (DHA) has informed beneficiaries that modifications to MTF capacity will be conditions-based. DHA indicates selected MHS transformation