



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Veterans Health Administration

In Reply Refer To: 405/00

White River Junction VA Medical Center

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White River Junction, VT 05009

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April 24, 2024

To: Vermont Senate Government Operations Committee

Subject: H-794

As you prepare to hear testimony concerning H-794, I'd like to offer some thoughts on our experience working with The Vermont Veterans Home over the years.

The White River Junction VA Healthcare System serves over 25,000 Veterans throughout Vermont and four contiguous counties in NH. We have been fortunate to have an excellent working partnership with The Vermont Veterans Home (VVH), an organization licensed to meet all levels of resident care needs. Their services have provided a multitude of benefits to Veterans in our state.

VVH provides long term care, short term rehabilitation, dementia care, as well as a Domiciliary for Veterans. They have enclosed outside areas for Veterans to walk, exercise, and enjoy the outdoors safely, whether ambulatory or in a wheelchair. VVH offers numerous activities, social work, wound care, hospice and much more. They provide excellent care to our Veterans.

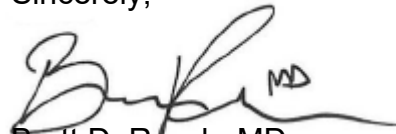
For those of us who call Vermont home, we know it is a rural state, rich in beauty and history. It is a wonderful place to live. Yet, the rural nature of our state presents challenges for Veterans who would greatly benefit from the excellent services offered by the VVH which currently operates solely in Bennington.

Many of our northern Vermont Veterans must travel more than two hours if they wish to access VVH services. Unfortunately, this is prohibitive for many and their options remain limited. As Veterans, family members, and their loved ones seek options to support their well-being, VVH has been a wonderful community partner in the Bennington area.

VVH services have made a positive, meaningful impact on both Veterans and their families in times of their greatest need. We are fortunate to work with VVH and value our robust partnership. However, the most important beneficiaries are Vermont Veterans and their families for without the excellent services offered by VVH, the available options in our lovely, rural state would be diminished.

I would like to extend my sincere gratitude for VVH, their staff, and their care of our nation's Veterans.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "B. Rusch MD". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a small "MD" written in the middle.

Brett D. Rusch, MD
Executive Director, White River Junction VAHCS
Assistant Professor of Psychiatry
Geisel School of Medicine at Dartmouth