



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Andrew J. Lanza

Senator Lanza Joins Congressman Donovan in Successful Push to Keep Critical Services at Brooklyn VA Hospital

ANDREW J. LANZA October 10, 2017

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“The Brooklyn VA Medical Center remains a crucial resource. I’m glad to know that our veterans will continue to receive the important medical services they need right where they’ve always been able to receive them. Thank you, Congressman Donovan, for leading the effort to ensure our veterans have reliable access to VA doctors and medical treatments.”

Congressman Dan Donovan (NY-11) today announced his successful advocacy to keep critical medical services at the Brooklyn VA Medical Center (VAMC). A proposed change would have required veterans to travel to Manhattan for certain inpatient surgeries, including open heart procedures, joint reconstructions, and appendectomies. In August, Donovan led a push, together with a bipartisan coalition, for the VA to abandon the proposal and maintain existing services at the Brooklyn VAMC.

Congressman Donovan said, “After discussing this matter extensively with my veterans’ roundtable, I asked the Department of Veterans Affairs to reconsider its proposal. Our veterans have sacrificed enough, and they shouldn’t have to trek to Manhattan for medical care. To their credit, the VA heard our concerns and decided to keep everything as is at the Brooklyn hospital. I’ll keep fighting for those who put everything on the line to defend our

great country.”

“The fact is we owe our vets a debt of gratitude that can never be repaid,” said Borough President James S. Oddo. “While to a bureaucrat looking at a map, the idea of making Staten Island veterans go to Manhattan for complex medical procedures might make sense, all Staten Islanders know the real negative effect this would have. Although not many miles away, we know Manhattan is truly a world’s away due to the time it takes to get there, not only for the veteran going in for these inpatient procedures, but also for his family members who would have to make the trip daily to visit their loved one. Thank you to Congressman Donovan for leading this successful bipartisan effort that led to a common sense result.”

Brooklyn Borough President Eric L. Adams said, “Thanks to the leadership of Representative Donovan, the bipartisan response to the threat of service cuts at the Brooklyn VA Medical Center has been successful. After putting their lives on the line to defend our freedom, our veterans deserve nothing less than reliable access to high-quality health care.

City Council Minority Leader Steven Matteo said, “Moving critical medical services from the Brooklyn VA hospital to Manhattan, especially a time when medical care for veterans who live in New York City has already been reduced, would have caused undue harm to the thousands of Staten Island men and women who served and defended our country and urgently need this care. I am pleased Secretary Shulkin and Director Parauda listened to us and have now reconsidered this ill-advised plan.”

“A reduction in critical services at the Brooklyn VA hospital would be devastating to Staten Island veterans. Necessary travel to Brooklyn from Staten Island to access services is cumbersome enough, but cutting resources from the Brooklyn VA and requiring that Staten Island veterans endure an additional hardship by traveling to Manhattan for those services would have really been a travesty of justice,” said Council Member Joseph Borelli. “I’m

thankful that Rep. Donovan was able to identify this issue in advance and that the VA heard and responded to our concerns in a meaningful way.”

Senator Andrew Lanza said, “The Brooklyn VA Medical Center remains a crucial resource. I'm glad to know that our veterans will continue to receive the important medical services they need right where they've always been able to receive them. Thank you, Congressman Donovan, for leading the effort to ensure our veterans have reliable access to VA doctors and medical treatments.”

Senator Marty Golden said, “I want to thank Secretary Shulkin for his response to our letter and reconsidering the proposed changes to the Brooklyn VA Medical Center. Our veterans deserve a fully functional local hospital with a wide array of services to accommodate their unique medical needs. Secretary Shulkin agreed that our veterans should not be forced to travel to Manhattan to receive the tests, treatments and programs for which they are entitled. I hope moving forward, the VA will be looking for ways to expand our local VA hospitals so that each borough will have an easily accessible medical facility that meets the demands of the growing local veteran population.”

Senator Diane Savino said, “Thank you to Congressman Donovan and all involved for helping to ensure our Veterans can stay local to receive their treatment. These critical services are needed for countless veterans who have already given so much to our country. I can't fathom creating a situation in which we put the most important health services out of distance.”

Assemblyman Ron Castorina said, “This is great news for our veterans. I commend Congressman Donovan for his unwavering commitment to the men and women who risk their lives to keep us all safe.”

"The idea to move services from the Brooklyn VA was unacceptable from the moment it was first conceived. Congressman Donovan led the charge to ensure this did not happen, and I'm proud to be a small part of a bipartisan coalition that stood up for local veterans who have sacrificed so much for each and every one of us," said Assemblywoman Nicole Malliotakis.

Assemblyman Peter Abbate said, "I am grateful that the Department of Veterans Affairs listened to our concerns and will maintain crucial medical services at the Brooklyn VA Hospital. We must all do our part to ensure that our community's veterans have the critical services they need and quality care provided to them."

"I'm pleased that elderly, frail patients in Brooklyn and Staten Island won't be forced to travel needlessly for medical procedures when the quality care they were receiving at the Brooklyn VA was suiting their needs," said Assemblyman Steven Cymbrowitz. "Thanks to Rep. Donovan for taking the lead on this issue and reminding the federal government that the men and women who proudly served our nation deserve better than to be made victims in some cost-saving scheme."

Mike Gargiuolo, President of Rolling Thunder Chapter 2 New York, said, "We're very happy that the Congressman was able to convince the VA not to move the surgical unit. Local veterans are always in need of medical assistance, and keeping the VA medical surgical unit intact is a win-win for both the veterans and the community."

George E. Parsons, Commander of the Korean War Veterans of Staten Island, said, "Thank you, Congressman Donovan, for your successful advocacy to keep critical medical services at the Brooklyn VA Medical Center. Once again, you came through for all veterans and their families."

Kristen Rouse, U.S. Army Veteran and Founding Director of NYC Veterans Alliance, said, “We applaud the leadership of Congressman Donovan and the bipartisan advocacy of the many Brooklyn elected leaders who stood against closure and contraction of services at the Brooklyn VAMC. As our leaders and our community are well aware, we must focus on improving VA care for our city's veterans, not reducing available options. We are pleased to see that the veterans who rely on the Brooklyn VA can rest assured that all existing services will remain open and available for them.”

Michael Sulsona, Junior Vice Commandant of the Staten Island Marine Corps League, said, “Veterans can give thanks to Congressman Dan Donovan's pursuit in keeping our Brooklyn VA open for complete health care services. Turning the Brooklyn VA to an outpatient clinic would be disastrous to our veterans in need of health care. For generations of veterans and for those are still on active duty, the Brooklyn VA has become the only total care center within reach. Thank you, Congressman Donovan, for your support and concern for the well-being of those who served.”

Herbert Morales, Commander of Disabled American Veterans Chapter 154, said, “As a disabled Vietnam veteran that lives in Brooklyn, I find it a severe hardship to have appointments at the Manhattan VA hospital. There is no parking at this facility and I am not able to travel there by bus or train. Thanks to Congressman Donovan and all involved for working to keep medical services at the Brooklyn VA hospital and for helping all the veterans with these issues.”

Raymond Aalbue, Executive Director of the United Military Veterans of Kings County, said, “This is great news. Veterans are one of America’s greatest assets and their welfare must be a priority. Thanks to Congressman Donovan for pushing the agenda and making sure that veterans and their families will continue to be cared for by the VA.”

Donovan has focused extensively on veterans issues. His Staten Island and Brooklyn offices host a VA representative one day each month for one-on-one meetings with local veterans and their families to discuss benefits or troubleshoot cases. Those interested in an appointment can contact Donovan's offices at 718-351-1062 (Staten Island) or 718-630-5277 (Brooklyn). Donovan also recently passed an amendment requiring the Department of Defense to reanalyze the housing assistance it provides to local student-veterans. Staten Islanders receive a fraction of the resources given to student-veterans in the other four boroughs. And earlier this month, Donovan announced a federal grant for veterans in need to access pro-bono legal services.