

EUGENE VINDMAN
7TH DISTRICT, VIRGINIA

HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON CYBER, INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIES, AND
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SUBCOMMITTEE ON COMMODITY MARKETS, DIGITAL ASSETS, AND
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UNITED STATES
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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April 10, 2026

The Honorable Doug Collins
Secretary of Veterans Affairs
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Secretary Collins,

For a year, I have urged you to address unacceptable staffing shortages at the Veterans Administration (VA) Fredericksburg Health Care Center. Despite numerous letters, direct conversations, and engagement through official channels, veterans from my district continue to suffer because of your failure to act. To add insult to injury, your agency recently announced additional cuts across not only Virginia, but the entire country that target critical areas of care such as mental health and suicide prevention.¹ This conduct demonstrates a clear prioritization of politics over the well-being of America's heroes. As I will lay out below, your decision to ignore Virginia's veterans, combined with your insistence on eliminating VA jobs, reflects a broad bureaucratic indifference to quality of care that is harming the veterans you claim to serve.

On February 28, 2025, the VA opened a new facility in Fredericksburg, Virginia. The VA's own press release boasted it was a "state-of-the-art" complex that "is the nation's largest VA health care clinic spanning more than 470,000 feet."² However, the facility was not fully staffed, and it became clear that the staffing plan was inadequate and not commensurate with the scale of the operation. On April 10, 2025, I wrote to you on behalf of VA patients in my district, calling your attention to the inadequate staffing levels (see appendix A). I did not receive a response until two months later, in June, when a member of your Congressional Liaison Office offered to speak with my team. While the assurances provided during that meeting were encouraging, the follow-up letter you forwarded to my office some days later was wholly insufficient and failed to mention a single substantive commitment (see appendix B).

Later that same month, I happened to see you in person and requested a meeting where we could discuss the needs of the 72,000 veterans who are my constituents. At the time, you agreed. Your staff proposed tentative dates throughout the following weeks until late August when they told my office I would have to wait until later. I have yet to hear from you on this point.

¹ Meryl Kornfield, Hannah Natanson, and Lisa Rein, "VA Looks to Abruptly Eliminate Tens of Thousands of Health Care Jobs," Washington Post, December 13, 2025,

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2025/12/13/va-veterans-affairs-job-cuts-trump/>

² Press Release, U.S. Dep't of Veterans Affs., VA Celebrates Opening of Fredericksburg Health Care Center (Feb. 28, 2025), <https://www.va.gov/richmond-health-care/news-releases/fredericksburg-va-health-care-center-grand-opening/>.

Starting in early October, I sent more frequent letters, demanding clarity on the agency's plans for the Fredericksburg Center (see Appendices C, D, and E). After my third letter, a Senior Advisor in your Congressional Liaison Office called and emailed my Chief of Staff, indicating that an official response from the agency would be forthcoming.

It took your office until February of 2026 to respond to my outreach from October 2025. What's more, the barely one-page letter you sent once again contained no substantive commitments and offered evasive responses to the questions raised in my previous correspondence (see appendix F).

That brings us to today. Over the past 12 months, I have received only two official communications from your agency that were relevant to the issues at hand, and both lacked any meaningful commitments. A limited level of correspondence might be understandable if significant progress were being made to improve VA services. However, your agency's own data demonstrates that veterans are facing an increasingly opaque care system that appears completely indifferent to their needs and health outcomes.

Wait times for new individual mental health appointments in Fredericksburg have stretched to 88 days, and instead of hiring additional staff to address this crisis, VA leadership is cutting mental health and suicide prevention positions.³ Meanwhile, across the country, thousands of doctors, nurses, and schedulers have retired as a direct result of your policies.⁴ This turnover has left 1.2 million veterans without an assigned VA primary care provider.⁵ Staffing losses and retirements are also undermining research and have been deemed responsible for delaying the launch of critical trials for cancer and addiction treatments.⁶ As if these failures were not enough, you then surreptitiously used emergency powers to significantly reduce the quality of care for disabled veterans by redefining disability itself, stripping veterans of their vital benefits simply because they are receiving treatment or taking medication.⁷

Mr. Secretary, your unwillingness to engage with me, while the quality of care at the VA deteriorates makes it clear that you are prioritizing politics over the well-being of veterans.

³ Fredericksburg 3 VA Clinic." VA Richmond Health Care | Veterans Affairs. Accessed April 10, 2026. [Fredericksburg 3 VA Clinic | Veterans Affairs](https://www.veterans.senate.gov/services/files/A08A4C86-DB56-4A01-B98F-6ED1CF3F2B7A); U.S. Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs, *Breaking the Pact: Impacts of Trump, DOGE, and Doug Collins' Ongoing Assault on Veterans*, January 22, 2026, PDF, U.S. Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs website, accessed April 10, 2026, <https://www.veterans.senate.gov/services/files/A08A4C86-DB56-4A01-B98F-6ED1CF3F2B7A>; Meryl Kornfield, Hannah Natanson, and Lisa Rein, "VA Looks to Abruptly Eliminate Tens of Thousands of Health Care Jobs," *Washington Post*, December 13, 2025, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2025/12/13/va-veterans-affairs-job-cuts-trump/>; American Psychological Association, "VA Mental Health Care," *APA.org*, accessed April 10, 2026, [Deep cutbacks and restructuring at the VA are diminishing care](https://www.apa.org/press-releases/2025/12/13/va-mental-health-care)

⁴ U.S. Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs, *Breaking the Pact: Impacts of Trump, DOGE, and Doug Collins' Ongoing Assault on Veterans*, January 22, 2026, PDF, U.S. Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs website, accessed April 10, 2026, <https://www.veterans.senate.gov/services/files/A08A4C86-DB56-4A01-B98F-6ED1CF3F2B7A>.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.; Eric Umansky and Vernal Coleman, "Internal VA Emails Reveal How Trump Cuts Jeopardize Veterans' Care, Including to 'Life-Saving Cancer Trials'," *ProPublica*, May 6, 2025, [Internal VA Emails Reveal How Trump Jeopardizes Veterans' Care — ProPublica](https://www.propublica.org/article/internal-va-emails-reveal-how-trump-jeopardizes-veterans-care)

⁷ Patty Nieberg and Jeff Schogol, "Concern and Confusion Erupt over New VA Disability Rule," *Task & Purpose*, February 18, 2026, <https://taskandpurpose.com/military-life/veterans-affairs-disability-rule-2026/>.

Actions speak louder than words, and your actions demonstrate that your primary objective is to eliminate jobs for care providers, even at the expense of delaying essential services for my constituents. These decisions have real consequences and are harming veterans and their families. For the sake of those you are charged with serving, I urge you to abandon your slash-and-burn approach to staffing and prioritize making the investments necessary to ensure the health and dignity of our servicemembers. It is imperative that you take immediate and decisive action to increase resources and hiring in Fredericksburg and at other critical VA facilities around the country.

Despite my immense frustration, I am always available to discuss these and any veteran’s matters at any time you are willing to meet. I truly hope you capitalize on this opportunity to reverse course. Regardless of your response, I will continue everything in my power to champion veterans in my district and nationwide.

Please provide complete responses, along with all necessary supporting materials, for the following inquiries no later than April 24, 2026:

1. As you can see below, and as I mentioned in the letter, the wait time for a new mental health appointment at the Fredericksburg VA Health Care Center is 88 days. This is unacceptable. What immediate steps are you taking to change this? What is your goal wait time for a new appointment? How long will it take you to achieve that goal?

Wait Times ⓘ

Average new and established patient wait times

Domain Information >

Service ↑	Established patients ↑↓	New patients ↑↓
AUDIOLOGY	9 days	7 days
CARDIOLOGY	15 days	63 days
DENTAL	8 days	58 days
DERMATOLOGY	14 days	45 days
ENDOCRINOLOGY	4 days	35 days
GASTROENTEROLOGY	40 days	N/A
MENTAL HEALTH GROUP	3 days	N/A
MENTAL HEALTH INDIVIDUAL	13 days	88 days

2. Provide a comprehensive list of all vacant positions at the facility, specifying for each: job title, whether currently posted, current stage in the hiring process, and anticipated fill date.
3. Building on the above request, assure our community that the VA will have hired 100% of the positions by December 31, 2026 understanding that some frictional turnover will exist.
4. Your agency has communicated that it is eliminating vacant positions nationwide. Please describe whether this policy would result in a net increase or decrease in care professionals in positions related to primary care, mental health, and suicide prevention.
5. Specify which previously vacant positions at the Fredericksburg VA Health Care Center have

been eliminated, including any mental health or suicide prevention positions. Provide detailed justifications for the elimination of each position and whether this was pursuant to the reduction initiatives implemented by the administration from January 20, 2025, to April 10, 2026.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Eugene Vindman". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Eugene Vindman
Member of Congress

Appendix A – April 10, 2025, Letter from Congressman Vindman to Secretary Collins

EUGENE VINDMAN
7TH DISTRICT, VIRGINIA

HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
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April 10, 2025

The Honorable Doug Collins
Secretary of Veterans Affairs
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20420

Secretary Collins,

On February 28, 2025, I had the privilege of attending the ribbon cutting ceremony for the brand-new Fredericksburg Health Care Center. Upon opening, this center was slated to become the largest VA Health Care Center in the nation. With 72,000 veterans in the Seventh District, and a total of 685,503 across Virginia, there is tremendous demand and need for these services in the heart of my district. This care center is more than just a building — it is a promise. A promise to the men and women who have served our country that they will receive the care, dignity, and support they so rightly deserve.

Unfortunately, the administration has broken that promise. Last month it signed a continuing resolution that cut \$23 billion from the Toxic Exposures Fund for veterans suffering from burn pits, Agent Orange, and other toxic exposures. To date, the new facility is only staffed at one third of its capacity. The administration has issued its legally dubious “fork in the road” that encouraged federal employees to leave. The VA has also terminated 2,400 probationary employees and is planning to lay off at least 80,000 more staff as part of the Trump administration’s effort to reduce the size of the federal workforce. While the administration claimed to exempt the VA from its hiring freeze, OPM locked out human resources officials from new hire records without approval from senior leadership at OPM making it impossible to hire. The atmosphere of fear the administration has created by putting current VA employees on notice that it is cutting 80,000 employees is hardly the way to encourage new employees to sign up.

However, I am confident that people want or at least wanted to work at this new VA. In December there was a career fair for the VA where over 1,000 qualified applicants participated. The workforce is there. We have the ability to serve veterans, but only if OPM and the

administration do their job. What we have seen in the meantime is not the way to help veterans, it is not the way to honor their sacrifices, and it is certainly not the way to ensure they receive the timely, high-quality care they need and deserve. In short, it is the opposite of government efficiency.

Veterans in my district are already experiencing delays in scheduling appointments, accessing specialists, and receiving essential mental health services. Your own press release advertised how this new facility would serve more than 35,000 veterans each year and create up to 900 new jobs.¹ But so far these boasts have only proved to be hollow promises. The staffing shortages at the Fredericksburg Health Care Center will only exacerbate these issues, leading to longer wait times and reduced care options for the very people who have served and sacrificed for our nation.

Given these concerns, I respectfully ask for clarification on the following:

1. What is the Department of Veterans Affairs' plan to address the immediate staffing shortages at the Fredericksburg Health Care Center?
2. How does the VA intend to mitigate the impact of the hiring freeze on critical health care services for veterans nationwide?
3. What criteria is the administration using to determine which positions are subject to layoffs, and what safeguards are in place to ensure veterans' care is not compromised?
4. Has the VA conducted an assessment of the potential effects that staffing reductions will have on wait times and the overall quality of care? If so, what were the findings?
5. What steps is the VA taking to ensure that rural and underserved veterans, like many in my district, are not disproportionately affected by these workforce reductions?

I urge you to take immediate action to fully staff the Fredericksburg Health Care Center and all VA health care facilities across the country. Our veterans cannot afford to wait, and we cannot afford to break our commitment to them.

I appreciate your prompt attention to this urgent matter and look forward to your response on how the Department of Veterans Affairs intends to address these staffing shortages.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Eugene Vindman". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Eugene Vindman
Member of Congress

¹ Press Release, Department of Veterans Affairs, VA Celebrates Opening of Fredericksburg Health Care Center (Feb. 28, 2025), <https://www.va.gov/richmond-health-care/news-releases/fredericksburg-va-health-care-center-grand-opening/>.

Appendix B – June 3, 2025, Response Letter from Secretary Collins to Congressman Vindman

THE SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
WASHINGTON
June 3, 2025

The Honorable Eugene Vindman
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Vindman:

Thank you for your April 10, 2025, letter to the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) regarding alleged staff shortages and the impact of the Federal hiring freeze on the Fredericksburg Health Care Center (FHCC). I appreciate the opportunity to respond to your inquiry.

My commitment to Veterans and VA is steadfast. Everything I do is in pursuit of ensuring Veterans receive the benefits and services they deserve, and instilling a lasting culture of caring, customer service, and accountability at VA that focuses on always putting Veterans first. This is why I visited FHCC on April 10, 2025.

VA continues to take multiple steps to ensure all mission-critical positions are exempt from the Federal hiring freeze, so VA benefits and services are not impacted. In collaboration with the White House and the Office of Personnel Management, VA exempted more than 300,000 essential positions from the hiring freeze. These positions provide health care and other vital services.

FHCC is hiring and is expanding services on schedule. VA has implemented a deliberate, phased approach guiding both staffing and service expansion. Since welcoming its first patients on March 3, 2025, FHCC has transitioned approximately 230 staff from 3 existing clinics, hired 35 new staff, and made 130 additional selections with onboarding continuing through September 2025. Five new primary care providers are set to start by September 2025, supporting the goal of establishing 20 Patient Aligned Care Teams within the first year—a target FHCC is on pace to exceed due to sustained Veteran demand. Despite a nationally competitive health care hiring landscape, interest in FHCC positions remains strong. Nearly 1,000 job seekers attended a January hiring fair, and many of the recent hires stemmed from that effort.

Operations are expanding successfully with more than 50,000 Veteran visits recorded in March alone—a 21% increase compared to the same period at legacy sites. The long-term staffing plan includes more than 1,100 personnel with new services launching in phases through the end of 2026.

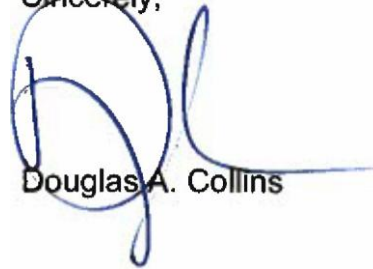
To summarize, the FHCC is operational and is fully on schedule. As long as there is

patient demand, we will hire to meet it. Our focus remains on ensuring that our Veterans continue to receive the benefits and services they deserve without disruption

The Honorable Eugene Vindman

Thank you for your continued support of the Nation's Veterans.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'D. Collins', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Douglas A. Collins

Appendix C – October 6, 2025 Letter from Congressman Vindman to Secretary Collins

Eugene Vindman
7th District, Virginia

House Armed Services Committee

Subcommittee on Cyber, Information Technologies,
and Innovation

Subcommittee on Seapower and Projection Forces

House Committee on Agriculture

Subcommittee on
Conservation, Research, and Biotechnology

Subcommittee on Commodity Markets, Digital Assets, and
Rural Development



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October 6, 2025

The Honorable Doug Collins
Secretary of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Ave NW
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Secretary Collins,

I am writing to urge you to take quick, decisive action to address the severe staffing shortages at the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Fredericksburg Health Care Center. The number one complaint I hear from veterans in my district is that this facility, despite being modern and well-equipped, remains dramatically understaffed. At present, the Fredericksburg VA Center feels more like a ghost town than a medical center designed to provide timely, high-quality care to those who have served our country.

As you and I both know, our nation owes a debt of gratitude to the men and women who were willing to lay down their lives for our freedoms. In return for their commitment to us, we promised to provide them with needed medical care upon completion of their service. The Department of Veterans Affairs is breaking that promise.

In an effort to help my constituents, I asked you to commit to immediate action to address the staffing shortage at the Fredericksburg medical facility. Instead, your response outlined a phased hiring plan that stretches over several years. That drawn-out timeline is unacceptable. Every month of delay leaves Virginia's veterans without the timely, comprehensive care they have earned through their service.

Because veterans in my district are not receiving the care they were promised, they are being forced into an already overstretched private healthcare market. For example, one of my constituents, a disabled veteran seeking surgery and physical therapy through the community care system, has faced repeated delays and worsening health due to administrative issues and long waits. This directly violates the VA's commitment to

“timely and quality care” for veterans. In fact, this constituent even totaled his car in an accident while commuting to Richmond for care that should be available to him at the Fredericksburg facility.

I urge you to remember that caring for veterans is not a partisan issue. It is a solemn promise this country owes to its warriors. Please work with me to uphold this promise and ensure our facilities are fully staffed, and America’s veterans have access to the timely, high-quality care they deserve. In the spirit of working with you towards these ends I ask that you please respond to the following questions:

1. What specific steps will you take to expedite hiring at the Fredericksburg Health Care Center?
2. Do you believe it is acceptable for veterans to wait up to two years to receive full and adequate care?
3. What criteria is the administration using to determine which positions are subject to layoffs, and what safeguards are in place to ensure veterans’ care is not compromised?
4. Has the VA conducted an assessment of the potential effects that staffing reductions will have on wait times and the overall quality of care? If so, what were the findings?
5. What steps is the VA taking to ensure that rural and underserved veterans, like many in my district, are not disproportionately affected by these workforce reductions?

I appreciate your prompt attention to this urgent matter and look forward to receiving a response by Monday, October 13th, 2025.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Eugene Vindman". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Eugene Vindman
Member of Congress

Appendix D – October 17, 2025 Letter from Congressman Vindman to Secretary Collins

Eugene Vindman
7th District, Virginia

House Armed Services Committee

Subcommittee on Cyber, Information Technologies,
and Innovation

Subcommittee on Seapower and Projection Forces

House Committee on Agriculture

Subcommittee on
Conservation, Research, and Biotechnology

Subcommittee on Commodity Markets, Digital Assets, and
Rural Development



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VINDMAN.HOUSE.GOV

October 17, 2025

The Honorable Doug Collins
Secretary of Veterans Affairs 810
Vermont Ave NW Washington,
DC 20420

Dear Secretary Collins,

I am writing to follow up on my October 6, 2025, letter regarding the severe staffing shortages at the Fredericksburg Health Care Center. In that correspondence, I urged the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to take immediate steps to address the unacceptable delays and lack of access to care faced by veterans in my district.

As of today, my office has not received a substantive response to the questions outlined in my earlier letter. I understand your office has indicated that you cannot respond during a government shutdown. However, this rationale is unconvincing. Members of Congress and their staffs continue to serve their constituents during a shutdown, and political appointees at the VA remain on duty. Given that veterans' health care is an urgent and life-impacting matter, your office has both the ability and the responsibility to work with Congress for the benefit of America's heroes.

While your agency refuses to act, veterans and their families continue to encounter long wait times, difficulty accessing specialized services, and the burden of being forced into the already strained private health care system. These conditions not only undermine the VA's mission but also jeopardize the health and well-being of those who served our nation. Given the urgency of this matter, I reiterate the questions previously posed:

1. What specific steps will you take to expedite hiring at the Fredericksburg Health Care Center?
2. Do you believe it is acceptable for veterans to wait up to two years to receive full and adequate care?
3. What criteria is the administration using to determine which positions are subject to layoffs, and what safeguards are in place to ensure veterans' care is not compromised?

4. Has the VA conducted an assessment of the potential effects that staffing reductions will have on wait times and the overall quality of care? If so, what were the findings?
5. What steps is the VA taking to ensure that rural and underserved veterans, like many in my district, are not disproportionately affected by these workforce reductions?
6. What could be more important than working to ensure veterans have access to the services they earned?

Our veterans cannot afford further delay. I strongly urge the Department to provide clear answers and a definitive plan of action no later than October 24, 2025. My office stands ready to work with you in any constructive capacity to ensure that staffing shortages are addressed swiftly and comprehensively.

I appreciate your prompt attention to this matter and look forward to your timely response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Eugene Vindman". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Eugene Vindman
Member of Congress

Appendix E – October 27, 2025 Letter from Congressman Vindman to Secretary Collins

Eugene Vindman
7th District, Virginia

House Armed Services Committee

Subcommittee on Cyber, Information Technologies,
and Innovation

Subcommittee on Seapower and Projection Forces

House Committee on Agriculture

Subcommittee on
Conservation, Research, and Biotechnology

Subcommittee on Commodity Markets, Digital Assets, and
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October 27, 2025

The Honorable Doug Collins
Secretary of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Ave NW
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Secretary Collins,

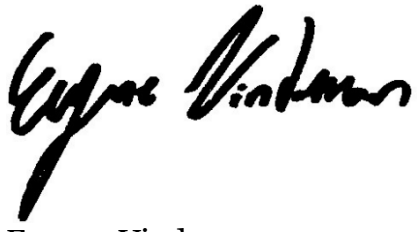
I am following up on my letters dated October 6th and October 17th, 2025. It has now been 3 weeks without a reply. Veterans in my district continue to experience unreasonable delays and diminished services. The Department's refusal to even acknowledge these concerns reflects a troubling disregard for its duty to those who served our nation.

I again request clear and specific answers to the following:

1. What steps will the VA take to expedite hiring at the Fredericksburg Health Care Center?
2. Does the VA consider it acceptable for veterans to wait up to two years for adequate care?
3. What criteria are being used to determine layoffs, and what safeguards ensure veterans' care is not compromised?
4. Has the VA assessed the impact of staffing reductions on wait times and quality of care?
5. How is the VA ensuring rural and underserved veterans are not disproportionately affected?

Your continued inaction is unacceptable. Please provide a full and substantive response immediately.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Eugene Vindman". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Eugene Vindman
Member of Congress

Appendix F – February 4, 2026 Response Letter from Secretary Collins to Congressman Vindman

The Honorable Eugene Vindman
U.S. House of Representatives Washington, DC
20515

Dear Representative Vindman:

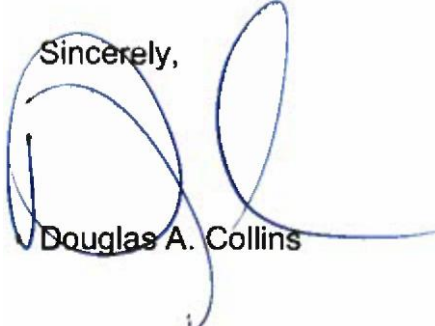
Thank you for your October 6, 2025, letter to the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) regarding staffing shortages at the Fredericksburg Health Care Center (FHCC). I appreciate the opportunity to address your concerns.

VA remains committed to working with you and your staff to ensure FHCC is fully staffed and able to deliver the timely, high-quality care Veterans have earned. Since FHCC opened to patients on March 3, 2025, it followed a deliberate, phased plan to build capacity while maintaining safe, high-quality care. As of late November 2025, FHCC onboarded 477 staff members with an additional 138 positions in recruitment. Of these, 107 were selected and are currently progressing through the hiring process.

The facility operates 27 Patient Aligned Care Teams, with two urgent care providers and two gap providers, an increase from the 15 teams that were operating in the Fredericksburg market before FHCC opened. This change reflects sustained progress toward achieving the long-term staffing and service levels originally planned for the site. VA will continue to monitor conditions at FHCC, expedite hiring where possible, and adjust operations to meet Veteran demand.

Responses to the questions enumerated in your letter are enclosed. I trust this information is helpful to you.

Thank you for your continued support of our mission.

Sincerely,

Douglas A. Collins