



**State Representative Mark Johnson**  
**State Representative Shane Wilkin**  
*Sponsor Testimony – House Concurrent Resolution 46*  
*Armed Services & Veterans Affairs Committee*  
*May 11, 2022*

Chairman Ghanbari, Vice Chair Loychik, Ranking Member Miller. Thank you for allowing me to offer sponsor testimony for House Concurrent Resolution 46. A few months ago, the U.S Department of Veterans Affairs conducted a market assessment of the Chillicothe VA, and unfortunately, that assessment reached the conclusion to recommend the Chillicothe VA Medical Center be closed. Specifically, the VA recommended:

- Closing the Chillicothe VA and building a new multi-specialty Community-Based Outpatient Clinic
- Relocating inpatient acute mental health and residential Rehabilitation Treatment Program to the Dayton VA Medical Center
- Moving half of the nursing home beds to the Dayton VA and the other half to a new facility in Circleville
- Collaborating with the Department of Defense’s Wright-Patt medical center to fill healthcare gaps

Congress first established the United States Veterans’ Bureau in 1921. President Harding appointed a commission to study veteran needs; which recommended \$35 million be set aside for hospital construction. The Veteran’s Bureau made plans for a permanent veteran’s hospital on the site of Camp Sherman which would become the Chillicothe VA Medical center which first opened its doors for patients in 1924. Camp Sherman was a historic training center for soldiers from western Pennsylvania, West Virginia and Ohio in World War 1. At the time, it was the third largest training center in the nation. A vocational school was shortly opened on the campus, teaching skills in automotive maintenance, agriculture, upholstery, electrical principles and wiring, woodworking, laundering and tailoring. Approaching World War II, the campus continued to grow to serve more veterans and was the fifth largest neuro-psychiatric VA hospital in the nation. It has continued to grow since then, adding the VA Memorial Baseball Stadium, a golf course, gymnasium, pool and chapel.

The Chillicothe VA Medical Center is the largest hospital in southern Ohio to treat veterans, and it has provided an outstanding level of care to veterans since its formation in 1924. It has nearly 1,400 employees and provides care to over 20,000 veterans, from 17 counties including parts of Kentucky and West Virginia, yearly for care. For many veterans in southeast Ohio, if the Chillicothe VA were to shut down, it would create a massive hurdle for them to receive the level of care they require. Forcing them to drive several hours to the next closest VA hospital that provides the services they have become accustomed to. For many veterans, making that drive is simply not an option.

Over the past decade, \$128 million has gone into renovating and updating the hospital to offer state of the art care to veterans. These funds have gone to improve mental health wards and primary care buildings on the campus. The VA also provides affordable housing to veterans through Freedom's Path Chillicothe. They have 60 houses on the Chillicothe VA campus to serve formerly homeless, at-risk of homelessness and disabled veterans.

The Chillicothe VA Medical Center has been a hub of culture and history since its opening and continues to provide economic benefits throughout the region. Thank you Chairman. My joint-sponsor and I are happy to answer any questions the committee may have.