

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

February 24, 2022

Maine Veterans' Homes Board of Trustees
Maine Veterans' Homes Central Office
460 Civic Center Drive
Augusta, ME 04330

Dear Members of the Board of Trustees:

We write to express our significant disappointment and deep concern regarding the Maine Veterans' Homes (MVH) Board of Trustees' recent decision to close the Machias and Caribou homes on April 15 and May 1, respectively. The closure of these homes will have a devastating impact on the 82 veterans and spouses of veterans who reside in these facilities. These veterans have rendered honorable service to our Nation, often during times of war. Their families, the 123 staff members who currently provide care to these veterans, as well as the surrounding communities and local hospitals will also be adversely affected by these unexpected closures.

Although we acknowledge that operating these homes in the long-term may pose challenges given expected demographic changes and the current nationwide shortage of trained, available health care workers, we urge the Board to reconsider its decision and consider all potential options short of closure so that veterans at these facilities have access to the care they have earned in their service to our Nation. This should include consideration of options such as expanding the eligibility for admission to a broader pool of veterans, including broader eligibility for members of the Maine National Guard. We also note that MVH's public 2019 tax return appears to show a gross operating profit of nearly \$25 million, which calls into question the urgent need to shutter these homes and warrants a fuller explanation of MVH's current financial position.

Maine's congressional delegation has always worked to support the needs of MVH and Maine veterans. In recent years, this support has included helping MVH secure a \$50 million grant to support the construction of a new home in Augusta, providing emergency COVID-19 funding for MVH from the *CARES Act*, and ensuring the passage of the *State Veterans Homes Domiciliary Care Flexibility Act* in December 2020 to provide the VA with needed flexibility to adequately care for veterans with early-stage dementia.

There is strong support for the Machias and Caribou facilities in Maine. We understand that Governor Mills recently directed her Administration, including the Maine Departments of Defense, Veterans, and Emergency Management, to provide assistance should you consider alternatives to closure. Additionally, Maine Senate President Troy Jackson recently introduced a bill to provide funding for the Machias and Caribou facilities.

We request that you accept the Governor's offer of assistance and take the time necessary to fully explore all options short of closing the Machias and Caribou MVHs. Furthermore, given the

strong support for Maine Veterans Homes from the Governor, the Maine Legislature, as well as its congressional delegation, we request that the Board meet with the delegation and Governor Mills, along with leadership from relevant state agencies, to discuss all options to maintain the Machias and Caribou homes.

We thank you for your consideration of our requests and for your many years of service on behalf of Maine's veterans.

Sincerely,



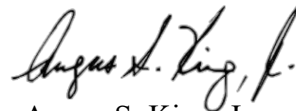
Jared F. Golden
Member of Congress



Susan M. Collins
U.S. Senator



Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress



Angus S. King, Jr.
U.S. Senator