

JOSH HAWLEY  
MISSOURI

115 RUSSELL SENATE OFFICE BUILDING  
TELEPHONE: (202) 224-6154  
FAX: (202) 228-0526  
WWW.HAWLEY.SENATE.GOV

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-2509

COMMITTEES  
JUDICIARY  
HOMELAND SECURITY  
AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS  
ENERGY  
SMALL BUSINESS  
AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

December 9, 2024

Honorable Lloyd J. Austin III  
Secretary of Defense  
U.S. Department of Defense  
1000 Defense Pentagon  
Washington, D.C. 20301

Dear Secretary Austin,

I write with great concern over reports that the Defense Health Agency (DHA) is considering downgrading the General Leonard Wood Army Community Hospital to a clinic. The Department of Defense (DoD) should immediately reverse course and ensure that Fort Leonard Wood keeps its hospital.

The planned downgrade of the newly built hospital at Fort Leonard Wood is an insult to service members, their families, and rural Missourians in the area. Eliminating a hospital at a major Army training center is frankly shocking. How does DoD expect to conduct any training, including Basic Combat Training and the various advanced schools at Ft. Leonard Wood, if the nearest emergency room is over 40 miles away?

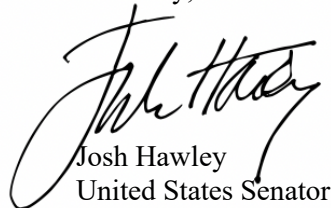
The DHA frames the pending decision as a cost saving measure, but the decision would only shift expenses onto Fort Leonard Wood officials and service members. Any injuries at Fort Leonard Wood requiring more than outpatient services would require significant transit to reach a hospital, using limited manhours at the expense of military readiness.

Fort Leonard Wood's hospital has also served the nearby community for decades, providing service members and their families with necessary care. Eliminating the hospital would place enormous burdens on service members. For instance, instead of receiving local treatment, wives of service members would now have to travel long distances to receive obstetric care. Fort Leonard Wood's hospital also serves nearby Missourians, who would have to travel hours otherwise to receive emergency treatment.

Taxpayers, too, should be outraged by DHA's decision making. Fort Leonard Wood's newly built hospital is scheduled to open in early 2025. For years, DHA has been onboard with upgrading Fort Leonard Wood's medical facilities. But after \$400 million in taxpayer dollars, DHA suddenly wants to end the hospital's most critical functions.

I demand that you immediately end any planned actions to downgrade Fort Leonard Wood's hospital into a clinic. Please also provide my office with a full explanation as to why DHA did not inform Fort Leonard Wood and Congressional officials sooner about such a drastic decision.

Sincerely,



Josh Hawley  
United States Senator

Cc:  
Secretary of the Army  
Director, Defense Health Agency