DCN: 8634
BRAC Commission

AUG 3 1 2005

Received

ST JOHN HEALTH PROVIDENCE

16001 West Nine Mile Road
Southfield, MI 48075

The Honorable Anthony J. Principi
Chairman
Base Realignment and Closure Commission (BRAC)
2521 South Clark Street, Suite 600
Arlington, VA 22202

August 11, 2005

Dear Chairman Principi,

I am writing to urge the BRAC to remove the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology (AFIP) from the list of military facilities slated for closure. The AFIP is an irreplaceable resource for disease research and patient care. This exceptional institution not only provides outstanding service to our nation's military community, but also contributes significant knowledge and education to the broader medical field's understanding of human disease.

The AFIP tissue repository is a valuable national treasure that must remain accessible to researchers and experts in laboratory medicine. The AFIP's collection of specimens has helped medical professionals understand, develop vaccines and treatments for, and sometimes cure, often-fatal diseases. Access to both archived material as well as newly acquired specimens must be preserved.

Each year the AFIP issues hundreds of thousands of hours in continuing medical education to a diverse group of medical professionals that specialize in pathology, forensics, radiology, emerging infectious disease, renal disease, ophthalmology, and urology. In fact, over 7,400 medical and other health professionals alone were educated and trained in 2004 through a variety of AFIP-sponsored venues including live courses, seminars and Internet courses.

The AFIP's leadership in the area of education and training advances the knowledge base and ensures the competence of thousands of medical professionals. It would be a major loss to both military and civilian medicine, especially at this time, if AFIP's consultative services were discontinued.

Should the AFIP be forced to close, our nation would lose a valuable resource that plays a key role in the advancement of medicine and contributes knowledge to improve the health of our nation's citizens. First, I respectfully request, that the BRAC eliminate its recommendation to dismantle the AFIP. Second, I urge the BRAC to ensure that the integrity of the tissue repository is preserved.

Thank you for your kind consideration.

Sincerely,

Jeanette A. Underhill, MD

Providence Hospital and Medical Centers
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