

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 17, 2016

The Honorable Mark Kirk
Chairman
Subcommittee on Military Construction,
Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jon Tester
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Military Construction,
Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Kirk and Ranking Member Tester:

As the Senate Appropriations Committee on Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies considers the Fiscal Year (FY) 2017 Appropriations bill, we respectfully request that the Subcommittee continue to provide robust funding for the Supporting Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) Program, the Grant and Per Diem (GPD) Program, and case management and supportive services as administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) under the Housing and Urban Development-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) Program.

In November 2015, the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), VA, and the Interagency Council on Homelessness released the 2015 Point-in-Time Count showing there were 47,727 homeless veterans across the country on a given night. Although this is a decline of thirty-five percent since 2010, having even a single veteran experiencing homelessness is one too many. We must continue our diligence and commitment if we are to end veteran homelessness in our country once and for all.

The SSVF, GPD, and HUD-VASH programs are important federal efforts aiming to end veteran homelessness. These unique programs support communities across the nation as they provide critical services and housing for veterans and their families.

Through the SSVF program, VA awards grants in all fifty states to non-profit organizations assisting low-income veterans and their families living in or transitioning to permanent housing. Grantees provide eligible veteran families with case management and assistance in obtaining VA and other benefits, including: health care services, daily living services, personal financial planning services, legal services, and housing counseling services. In 2015, SSVF served 157,416 participants, including 34,636 dependent children and 13,944 women veterans. According to VA's National Center on Homelessness, eighty-five percent of all families and seventy-six percent of all individuals served by SSVF exited the cycle of homelessness within two years of their discharge from the program.

The VA's GPD program provides grants to public entities and nonprofit organizations offering services and transitional housing to homeless veterans. The program includes two primary sources of funding: capital and per diem grants. Capital grants are awarded to entities that remodel, acquire, construct, or expand facilities that serve as veteran service centers or transitional housing. The per diem portion pays organizations for the housing and services provided to veterans at a fixed dollar rate. With nearly 15,000 beds nationwide serving almost 44,000 veterans in 2015, the GPD Program remains a key component in the fight to end veteran homelessness.

HUD-VASH is the largest supportive permanent housing program in our country combining HUD's Housing Choice rental assistance vouchers with VA case management and supportive services, including a range of medical, mental health, and employment services. In 2015, HUD-VASH funded 433 additional positions including Peer Support Specialists, Employment Specialists, Occupational Therapists, Psychiatrists, Nurses, and Housing Specialists. According to VA, by the end of 2016, 75,136 total veterans will be housed through HUD-VASH.

We understand the difficult decisions the Subcommittee faces in the current budget environment. However, the need for programs that support homeless veterans remains great. As we work towards the goal of ending veteran homelessness, providing sufficient funding to the SSVF, GPD, and HUD-VASH programs will allow for continued momentum and progress toward ending veteran homelessness. Thank you for your consideration of this request and your support of our nation's veterans and their families.

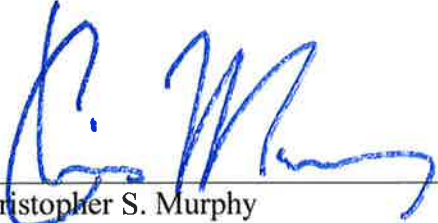
Sincerely,



Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator



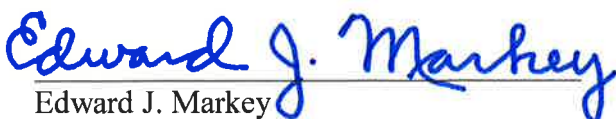
Mike Crapo
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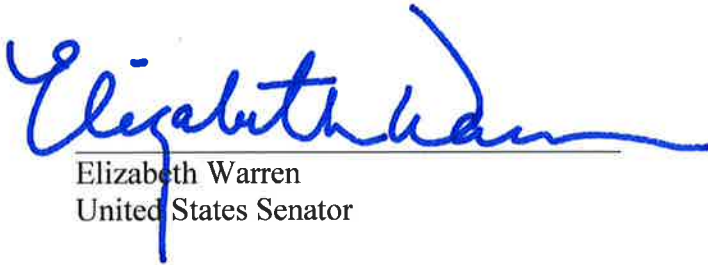
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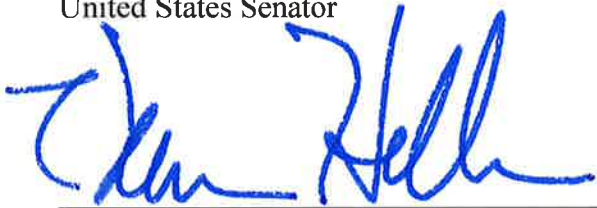
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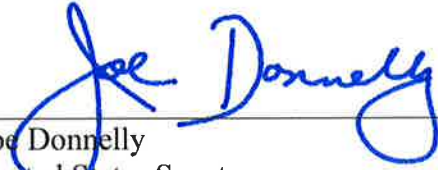
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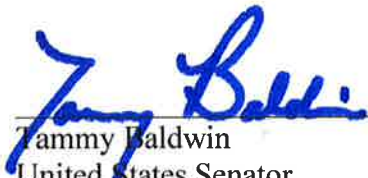
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United States Senator



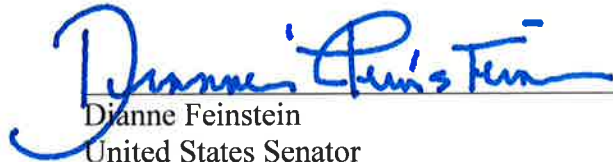
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