

Veteran Homelessness Report

December 3, 2017

Action needed. You are urged to contact our members of Congress and urge them to vote NO on HR1, legislation that would slash affordable housing production! Congress needs to:

1. Preserve the tax exemption on multifamily Housing Bonds;
 2. Make adjustments to offset the impact of a lower corporate rate on Low Income Housing Tax Credit investments.
 3. Include the provisions to strengthen the Low Income Housing Tax Credit from the Tiberi-Neal Affordable Housing Credit Improvement Act (H.R. 1661) and
 4. Retain the New Markets Tax Credit, a successful program with a proven track record as proposed by Tiberi-Neal New Markets Tax Credit Extension Act of 2017 (H.R. 1098).
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Even for the Homeless, No ID Means No Government Aid

Homeless people arguably need government aid more than anyone, but they often lack the required documents to get it. In hopes of fixing that, homeless people in New Jersey will soon be able to get a state identification card for free.

Those fees are "the only thing standing in the way between those homeless citizens and services to help them get on a pathway to self-sufficiency," says Assemblyman Raj Mukherji (NJ District 33), who sponsored two pieces of legislation on the issue.

A2106/S2351 which became PL 2016, C98 January 9, 2017 Permits homeless to receive certified copy of Birth Certificate without fee.

A2107/S2350 which became PL 2016, C99 January 9, 2017 Exempts homeless from fee for non-driver identification cards. This legislation went into effect in July, 2017.

According to the National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty lack of identification results in nearly half of the homeless population being denied access to basic social services. New Jersey joins eight other states trying to address the problem by waiving fees for homeless people applying for ID cards and birth certificates.

Most of the states with a waiver in place use the same approach as New Jersey and require a third-party service provider to verify that the person is homeless.

People experiencing homelessness often lose their ID cards during a crisis, according to Eric Ortega, a program director at the Homeless ID Project, a nonprofit in Arizona. They could have been robbed; they could have left the documents while fleeing a domestic violence incident; or they could have lost them in a flood or fire.

Currently in New Jersey, the Department of Motor Vehicles charges \$18 for an ID card, \$5 for a replacement, \$18 for renewal and an additional \$6 for the digitized photo on the card. The state's Department of Health charges \$25 for a birth certificate and \$2 for a replacement.

But while it's great when states waive fees, the application process is still onerous for a person who has experienced a crisis and lost most of their belongings.

Nevertheless, Mukherji wonders if there's an appetite for the same policy in even more states. "I do hope it becomes a trend," he says.

If his law's history in New Jersey is any indication, other lawmakers shouldn't have a problem passing similar legislation in their states: Both of Mukherji's bills received rare bipartisan support without a single dissenting vote.

The Only Federal Agency Dedicated to Homelessness Could Be Shut Down

October 2017, Atlanta ended veteran homelessness, placing nearly 1,900 people into permanent housing. The news would have attracted more media buzz if three states and more than 40 communities hadn't already claimed the same achievement in the last few years. Nationally, veteran homelessness has declined 47 percent in seven years. Overall homelessness is also down 14 percent.

Now, the federal agency largely credited with making that historic progress is at risk of losing all of its funding.

"When I was working on this stuff," says Ralph Becker, the former mayor of Salt Lake City, which was one of the first cities to end chronic veteran homelessness, "the federal role never got enough acknowledgment. The fact of the matter is, the federal resources are what made the difference."

This year, both the White House and the U.S. House Appropriations Committee have called for eliminating the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness, an independent federal agency with 20 full-time employees and an annual budget of roughly \$3.5 million. The U.S. Senate, though, has a competing proposal to fully fund the agency and remove a sunset provision that Congress has repeatedly extended in the past.

With a federal budget deadline of December 8, 2017 looming, it's not clear whether the council has a future after 2018.

Created in 1987 under the Reagan administration, the council is the only federal agency focused solely on homelessness. The federal government spends more than \$5 billion a year on at least 26 homeless assistance programs, which are spread across more than a dozen federal agencies, including the departments of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Veterans Affairs (VA) and Education. The council facilitates regular meetings between cabinet secretaries from those departments. Its staff also tracks research on effective housing strategies and shares lessons with officials across the country.

Under the Obama administration, the council helped create specific criteria that communities have to meet in order to declare an end to homelessness. To date, more than 880 state and local public officials have joined a national competition to end veteran homelessness.

"It became quite competitive, and that helped," says Becker. "Every mayor wanted to achieve that."

The Urban Institute concluded in a report last year that terminating the council "would slow efforts to end homelessness and weaken the collective movement."

The White House lists the council among 19 independent agencies it wants to cut in an effort “to move the Nation towards fiscal responsibility and to redefine the proper role of the Federal Government.” But the Trump administration isn't the first to question the council's existence. Last year, U.S. Rep. Mario Diaz-Balart of Florida, the Republican chairman of the appropriations subcommittee that oversees housing, opposed Congress' decision to reauthorize the council.

“This program doesn't support homeless people,” he said in a May 2016 hearing. “It pays for the salaries and expenses of HUD, for example.”

U.S. Rep. Barbara Lee, a California Democrat on the subcommittee, pushed back. “These bureaucrats are doing their job,” she said. “They're coordinating agencies. They're doing exactly what we would want to see other agencies do.”

This year, the subcommittee noted the success some communities have had in ending veteran homelessness, calling them “the result of hard work and effective collaboration and ... aspirational for the rest of the country.” Nonetheless, the subcommittee agreed to a proposed 85 percent funding cut, providing only enough for two employees to wind down operations next year.

Given the council's uncertain future, the agency already has seven of its 20 positions vacant -- a fact that worries anti-homelessness advocates.

“The danger is losing the progress on ending homelessness that we've made,” says Amanda Andere, CEO of Funders Together to End Homelessness, a national nonprofit that represents foundations working to house the homeless.

Indeed, the Urban Institute's report found that the council deserved credit for convincing many localities to invest in permanent supportive housing rather than emergency shelters or temporary transitional housing. With help from the council, HUD and the VA shared their data and standardized the way they counted homeless veterans, making it possible to document progress over time.

Disbanding the council would signal that ending homelessness was no longer a federal priority, people told the Urban Institute. State and local officials also predicted that without the council, they would have a harder time communicating with federal agencies and navigating the federal bureaucracy.

A broad range of groups, from the National Coalition for Homeless Veterans to the National League of Cities, have expressed their support for funding the council. U.S. Sen. Susan Collins, a Maine Republican who chairs the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee that deals with housing, has co-sponsored bipartisan legislation that would protect the council and make it a permanent agency. But it's a small line item getting lost in larger budget battles, says Barbara Poppe, a former executive director of the council.

At the same time that the council's funding is in question, the House has proposed a funding cut to the office that administers the Community Development Block Grant program and the Homeless Assistance Grants program. The current House and Senate tax reform proposals would also cut the value of the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit, a major driver in the creation of affordable housing.

“The problem,” Poppe says, “is that folks are putting out fires in many, many directions.”

New Report Shows Need for Improved Services for Homeless and At-risk Women Veterans

Recognizing the trend of an increasing number of women in the homeless veteran populations, Synchrony Financial and the National Coalition for Homeless Veterans conducted a survey to gather better data to identify reasons behind this trend and to identify and guide the implementation of better solutions moving forward.

The resulting report, Families that Work Partnership to Assist Women Veterans with Children, reveals several areas of inadequacy in communities' attempts to assist homeless women veterans and homeless women veterans with children. Some of these areas are common factors for all homeless veterans, but factors that stood out as more prevalent among women veterans include:

- Child care issues
- Intimate partner violence
- Fear of being separated from children
- Perception that veteran housing is only available for individuals
- Fear of safety for children in shelters
- Shelter rules barring children based on age or gender

In addition to a complete overview of those and other factors, the report offers five recommendations for improving access to services for homeless women veterans and homeless women veterans with families:

1. Communities should explore and implement responsible shelter diversion strategies.
2. Housing interventions should provide appropriate services for veteran families of varying compositions.
3. Mainstream resources must recognize, and meet the unique needs of women veterans and veteran families.
4. The financial management and budgeting skills gap for homeless women veterans and homeless veteran families must be closed.
5. Greater coordination between veteran homelessness and intimate partner violence resources is needed.

The full report, going into detail on the findings of the survey and explanation of the recommendations, is available here:

<http://content.delivra.com/etapcontent//NationalCoalitionforHomeles/SynchronyNCHVWomenVets.pdf>

New Jersey Legislation Dealing With Homelessness

A4406/S2845 provides for emergency assistance to individuals or families that are homeless or in temporary living arrangement due to domestic violence. 6/29/2017 passed by the Assembly (75-2-0). Passed favorably by the Senate Budget & Appropriations Committee 11/20/2017 - Yes {13} No {0} Not Voting {0} Abstains {0}.

This bill provides for emergency assistance to individuals or families that are homeless or in a temporary living arrangement due to domestic violence.

Current regulations at N.J.A.C.10:90-6.1 provide that emergency assistance is available in situations where there is an indication that an individual, or a parent and his or her children, have left their customary residence and the individual or family is in a state of homelessness due to imminent or demonstrated domestic violence that imperils the health and safety of the individual or family. The regulations further provide that temporary living arrangements during the period between the occurrence of the incidence of domestic violence and the application for emergency assistance do not negate the existence of a state of homelessness.

However, the regulations do not assert the supremacy of these protections for victims of domestic violence over other provisions that restrict emergency assistance from individuals and families that have “caused their own homelessness.” Advocates have testified to the Legislature that some victims of domestic violence have been denied emergency assistance on the grounds that they voluntarily left a job where their abuser could find them, failed to plan for substitute housing, or otherwise caused their own homelessness. This legislation is intended to ensure that victims of domestic violence can be assured of support from the emergency assistance program, even if they must depart their home abruptly and without adequate time to ensure compliance with other program requirements.

The committee amended the bill to provide that the domestic violence exception is not restricted to individuals or families who have left their customary residence – so that assistance would be available in the case of a family remaining in a home but unable to afford rent payment due to the removal of a domestic violence offender. In addition, the amendments clarify that emergency assistance is to be available based on an applicant’s signed attestation that their state of homelessness or imminent homelessness is the result of imminent or demonstrated domestic violence – so that applicants are not required to provide documentary evidence of domestic violence, which many victims may not have.

A4707/S2964 Prohibits residential substance use disorder treatment facilities and aftercare facilities from denying admission to individuals receiving medication assisted treatment for substance use disorder. S2964 passed by the Senate (35-0) March 13, 2017. A4707 reported favorably from the Assembly Health and Senior Services Committee (Yes {10} No {0} Not Voting {3} Abstains {0}) November 30, 2017.

This bill prohibits residential substance use disorder treatment facilities and aftercare facilities (including sober living homes and halfway houses) from denying admission to a person on the basis that the person is currently receiving medication assisted treatment for a substance use disorder, provided the treatment is administered by a licensed treatment provider. The bill specifies that medication assisted treatment includes but need not be limited to, methadone, buprenorphine, naltrexone, or any other medication approved by the Food and Drug Administration for the treatment of a substance use disorder.

The science of addiction medicine is increasingly finding that substance use disorders can be most effectively treated with a combination of counseling, peer support, and medication. Some of the medications used in such treatments, such as methadone and suboxone, are themselves addictive, but they can be safely administered and managed by trained medical professionals. Nonetheless, some substance use disorder treatment and aftercare programs operate with a philosophy that an addiction to one substance should not be replaced with an

addiction to another, and therefore they object to medication assisted treatment, instead emphasizing counseling and peer support. This philosophy, while earnest and well-meaning, has the unfortunate result of barring individuals receiving medically supervised medication assisted treatment from other recovery-related treatment, aftercare, and housing options. This bill is intended to remove scientifically outdated barriers to residential treatment, aftercare, and housing options for individuals in recovery.

Hill Watch: Congressional Funding Deadline Approaches

Votes expected soon to fund the federal government

Dec. 8, 2017 is when the stop-gap funding measure known as the “CR” (continuing resolution), passed by Congress a few months ago, runs out. This CR flat funded the federal government for a few additional months past the end of the fiscal year. We are rapidly approaching the expiration of that extension.

We already have a good picture of where the House and Senate will come down during negotiations on our core programs. Here are the proposed numbers in both houses of Congress, as compared to the numbers of the President’s budget request of several months ago:

	FY 2017	President’s Request	House Proposed	Senate Proposed
Grant and Per Diem				
	\$257m	\$257m	\$257m	\$257m
Supportive Services for Veteran Families				
	\$320m	\$320m	\$320m	\$340m
HUD-VA Supportive Housing				
	\$40m (~5,500 vouchers)	\$0	\$0	\$40m (~5,500 vouchers)
Homeless Veteran Reintegration Program				
	\$45m	\$45m	\$45m	\$47.54m

NCHV supports the Senate proposed numbers in every case. The need for more HUD-VASH vouchers is seen in many of the communities you work in, especially when it comes to the creation of new affordable housing through project basing of these vouchers. The SSVF program is in need of an infusion of funds to the tune of \$400m this year in order to prevent the expiration of the 2015 surge grants, but the additional funds seen in the Senate numbers will go a long way towards preventing that expiration in many communities. Likewise, the Senate numbers for HVRP are not perfect – NCHV supports, at the minimum, funding that program at its fully authorized level of \$50m.

This will come down to negotiations between the House and Senate. It is imperative that we all encourage Congress to accept the numbers proposed by the Senate committee. NCHV cannot predict exactly when the final measure will be written, agreed to, or passed, so it is imperative that we are all calling our representatives *now* before it is too late.

There is some talk that a larger, far reaching, budget deal *may* be met between the two political parties. In this case, the potential to increase program spending (including wider HUD funded programming) *may* present itself. There is also some talk that yet another temporary funding

package (CR) may be passed before the deadline; this would essentially delay the decisions and create a new deadline sometime in January.

Factors Contributing to Eviction from Permanent Supportive Housing: Lessons from HUD-VASH

Research brief from the National Center on Homelessness Among Veterans

The VA National Center on Homelessness Among Veterans has released the research brief, *Factors Contributing to Eviction from Permanent Supportive Housing*, by Dr. Ann Elizabeth Montgomery.

The results of this study indicate a number of factors associated with an eviction from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)-Veterans Affairs (VA) Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) as well as factors that may mitigate this risk, both of which may inform field-based applications to identify imminent eviction among tenants of permanent supportive housing.

To view this research brief,

http://content.delivra.com/etapcontent//NationalCoalitionforHomeles/Montgomery_HUD%20VASH%20Eviction_11.22.2017.pdf

Help End Homelessness

U.S. Representative Rodney Frelinghuysen (NJ-R-11) and U.S. Senators Cory Booker and Robert Menendez (NJ-D) are in key positions to increase federal funding for the McKinney-Vento Homelessness Assistance to \$2.6 billion.

You can help increase funding for the McKinney-Vento Homelessness Assistance Grant Program by taking a minute today to send letters to Senators Booker and Menendez and, if you live in the 11th district, Representative Frelinghuysen. Thank you to those of you who have already sent letters.

We need to urge our elected officials in Washington to support a \$217 million increase to \$2.6 billion in Fiscal Year (FY) 18 funding for the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Grants program. This increased funding would house approximately 40,000 more people than last year nationally.

We expect a final decision on funding levels for FY 2018 to be made around mid-December. It will be important to act earlier than that, as House and Senate offices are already making decisions about which problems with the current House and Senate bills they will try to fix.

To date, 24 agencies organizations in New Jersey have joined Monarch Housing in signing on to the letter and we would like to add your organization to the list!

1. Atlantic County Government
2. Bridges Outreach, Inc.
3. Coming Home of Middlesex County, Inc.,
4. Community Hope, Inc.
5. Elizabeth Coalition to House the Homeless
6. Family Promise of Morris County
7. Family Promise of Union County

8. Fleet Reserve Association
9. Garden State Episcopal Community Development Corpor
10. Green Party of Morris, Sussex, and Warren Counties
11. Haven House, INC
12. Homeless Solutions, Inc.
13. Housing & Community Development Network of NJ
14. MHANJ
15. Neighborhood Assistance Office
16. Newark Homes For All Coalition
17. NewBridge Services, Inc.
18. NJ State Association of Jewish Federations
19. Ocean Mental Health Services
20. Operation Warm Heart - First Presbyterian Church of Cranford Chapter
21. Port Elizabeth United Methodist Women
22. Sanctuary Foundation For Veterans
23. The Affordable Homes Group
24. Triple C Housing, Inc.

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