

# Veteran Homelessness Report

## June 30, 2019

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### **Opportunity Starts at Home: Building a Necessary and Secure Foundation for Healthy Communities**

The 2019 New Jersey Congressional Reception will be held on **Wednesday, July 24, 2019** in the Dirksen Senate Auditorium in Washington, D.C. As we meet with New Jersey's elected officials join us in declaring:

At this year's Congressional Reception on Wednesday, July 24, 13 individuals will speak about the impact of homelessness on their lives. Please register today to join Monarch Housing Associates and our 32 Partner Organizations in D.C., (<https://monarchhousing.org/2019-congressional-reception-registration/>)

This year, the Congressional Reception is using Opportunity Starts at Home as a part of the event's theme. The full theme for the 2019 Congressional Reception is Opportunity Starts at Home: Building a Necessary and Secure Foundation for Healthy Communities and has five key policy priorities.

#### 2019 Congressional Reception Federal Policy Priorities

The 2019 Annual Congressional Reception will take place on Wednesday, July 24, 2019 from 12:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. in Washington, D.C. The theme of this year's Congressional Reception is Opportunity Starts at Home: Building a Necessary and Secure Foundation for Healthy Communities. The Opportunity Starts at Home Campaign, spearheaded by the National Low Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC), is designed to address the needs of renters and low-income households in our communities. This year's Federal Policy Priorities are around the following key areas: Housing and Services, Medicaid, Affordable Homes, Fair Housing, and Housing Development. Attendees will hear from speakers highlighting housing is a right, housing is health care, and housing creates healthy communities.

#### Housing & Services

We request that our elected officials support an increase of \$217 million to \$2.6 billion in funding for the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Grants. The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Grants help Americans experiencing homelessness receive adequate outreach, shelter, transitional housing, supportive services, rent subsidies, and permanent housing. This increase will ensure that people impacted by homelessness receive necessary services in order to produce change.

#### Medicaid

We request that our elected officials oppose any replacement of the Affordable Care Act that eliminates Medicaid expansion which assists in ensuring that people experiencing homelessness receive critical healthcare services. Medicaid provides health insurance to parents/caretakers and dependent children, pregnant women, and people who are aged, blind or disabled.

## Affordable Homes

We request that our elected officials protect and expand the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher program to help connect families to areas of opportunity with access to good schools, well-paying jobs, healthcare and transit. Vouchers have proven to reduce child poverty, stabilize families, and contribute to healthy communities. Fully funding vouchers in use, increasing the number of vouchers, and incentivizing state and regional voucher administration are essential in ensuring accessible and affordable homes for all Americans.

## Fair Housing

We request that our elected officials ensure effective fair housing enforcement and provide the necessary resources to assist jurisdictions in complying with the Fair Housing Act. The Trump Administration has endangered fair housing. Increasing funding to ensure effective fair housing enforcement is necessary to ensure that jurisdictions comply with the Fair Housing Act. Enforcement of and compliance with the Fair Housing Act includes the duty of jurisdictions to affirmatively further fair housing.

## Housing Development Low Income Housing Tax Credit (Housing Credit)

We request that our elected officials expand and improve the Housing Credit to better target resources to households with the greatest needs and to increase the availability of safe and affordable housing. The Housing Credit is responsible through financing for nearly all of the affordable housing built and preserved since the program was authorized through tax reform in 1986.

## National Housing Trust Fund (HTF)

We request that our elected officials fund a \$5 billion expansion of the national HTF in an infrastructure package. In this infrastructure package, \$3.5 billion should be dedicated to comprehensive housing finance reform. The HTF is targeted towards the building, rehabilitating, preserving and operating of rental housing for extremely low-income people. Expanding funding for the HTF makes a broader commitment to access to and affordability of housing.

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## Continuum of Care projects in New Jersey

In January of this year, the U.S. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) announced that over \$44 million was awarded to support over 200 Continuum of Care projects in New Jersey. This funding was awarded through the competitive CoC grant application process. CoC funding provides support to programs serving those experiencing homelessness with a goal of helping communities quickly rehouse individuals and families while working to minimize the trauma caused by homelessness.

An increase in McKinney-Vento funding could increase HUD CoC awards to New Jersey in future years.

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## Criteria and Benchmarks for Achieving the Goal of Ending Veteran Homelessness

The United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) and its member agencies have adopted a vision through the federal strategic plan of what it means to end all homelessness, ensuring that it is a rare, brief, and one-time experience. USICH, the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) have also developed specific criteria and benchmarks for ending Veteran homelessness in order to help guide communities as they take action to achieve the goal.

[https://www.usich.gov/resources/uploads/asset\\_library/Criteria\\_and\\_Benchmarks\\_for\\_Ending\\_Veteran\\_Homelessness\\_June\\_2019\\_Update.pdf](https://www.usich.gov/resources/uploads/asset_library/Criteria_and_Benchmarks_for_Ending_Veteran_Homelessness_June_2019_Update.pdf)

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### New Jersey Veteran Homelessness Legislation

A783/S2153 Establishes grant program for homeless veterans shelters.

This bill would require the Adjutant General of the Department of Military and Veterans' Affairs to award grants to certain southern New Jersey counties to provide veterans with improved access to homeless shelters. Under the bill, Atlantic County, Cape May County, and Cumberland County may submit applications to the Adjutant General proposing locations for homeless veterans shelters and identifying property the county would provide to the State for the development of a shelter.

New Jersey's southern counties are in particular need of shelters for homeless veterans. Because of mobility issues, homeless veterans' access to resources is often limited by geographic location. Various factors may have caused homeless veterans to locate within southern New Jersey counties. However, when conditions, such as extreme cold, require them to seek out temporary shelter, they find themselves isolated from shelters and other facilities that provide resources for veterans. This bill would result in the development of shelters in locations appropriate to meet this need.

This legislation was first introduced in March 2015. In 2016 it was reported from the Senate Military and Veterans Affairs committee and referred to the Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee. It was also reported from the Assembly Military and Veterans Affairs committee and referred to the Assembly Appropriations committee. No further action has been achieved other than introduction to Senate and Assembly Military and Veterans' Affairs committee this session.

A4644/S3177 Authorizes bonus credits toward fair share affordable housing obligation for transitional housing occupied by veterans.

This bill would allow municipalities to obtain bonus credit toward the fulfillment of their fair share affordable housing obligations for transitional housing reserved for certain veterans. This bill would allow a municipality to receive one unit of credit and one-half bonus credit toward a municipality's fair share obligation for each unit of transitional housing occupied, or reserved for occupancy, by a veteran of low or moderate income who had active service in time of war, as defined in current law. The bill would allow these bonus credits to apply regardless of any limitation on the percentage of a municipality's fair share obligation that may be satisfied through bonus credits.

10/22/2018 introduced, referred to the Assembly Housing and Community Development Committee. 11/26/2018 introduced in the Senate, referred to the Senate Community and Urban Affairs Committee. No further action in either chamber.

A4465/S3178 Authorizes bonus credits toward fair share affordable housing obligation for housing units occupied by veterans; permits affordable housing obligation satisfaction through veterans' set aside of up to 35 percent of fair share.

This bill would allow municipalities to obtain bonus credit toward the fulfillment of their fair share affordable housing obligations for housing reserved for certain veterans. This bill would allow a municipality to receive one unit of credit and one-half bonus credit toward a municipality's fair share obligation for each unit of housing occupied, or reserved for occupancy, by a veteran of low or moderate income who had active service in time of war, as defined in current law. The bill would allow these bonus credits to apply regardless of any limitation on the percentage of a municipality's fair share obligation that may be satisfied through bonus credits.

This legislation also permits a municipality to submit a housing element to the council that sets aside up to 35 percent of all new affordable housing for low and moderate income veterans who had active service in time of war, as defined by current law.

10/22/2018 introduced, referred to the Assembly Housing and Community Development Committee. 11/26/2018 introduced in the Senate, referred to the Senate Community and Urban Affairs Committee. No further action in either chamber.

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### Transformation of VA Grant and Per Diem Programs: Considerations for Communities

According to the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness, homelessness among veterans has been reduced by nearly 50% between 2010 and 2018 and more than 75 communities have effectively ended veteran homelessness. The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Grant and Per Diem (GPD) programs are an important part of this work. A recent transformation in the GPD program positions it to have an even greater role in ensuring that homelessness among veterans is a rare, brief, and one-time experience. Through the release of the FY 2017 GPD Notice of Funding Availability, the VA initiated a transformation intended to update services, develop programs based on current community needs, evolve with the changing needs of veterans, ensure that GPD resources are integrated with local Continuums of Care (CoCs), and better serve veterans experiencing homelessness.

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