

Veteran Homelessness Report

June 24, 2018

Veterans Homelessness Increasing

Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Secretary Ben Carson recently speaking at the National Coalition for Veterans Homelessness annual convention noted that there is a nationwide rise in veteran's homelessness. This is the first time in seven years that advocates for homeless veterans are faced with a backslide in progress on the issue. Federal estimates on the number of homeless veterans nationwide declined from 74,000 in 2010 to about 40,000 in 2016, but saw a small rise last year.

In 2010, the VA established a goal of eliminating veteran homelessness by 2015. That goal has not been achieved. HUD, the Department of Labor and the VA have a wide range of programs that try to prevent homelessness among veterans, including health care, housing solutions, job training and education.

NJ's Homeless Veteran Supporters:

This is a reminder of the upcoming networking event on June 27, 2018 to provide current and value-added information to help our neediest of veterans and their families.

The 5th regional Housing Our Heroes Forum will be conducted on June 27, 2018 in Brooklawn, Camden County in partnership with Catholic Charities of the Camden Diocese and The American Legion.

The purpose of this networking event is to assist with improving and encouraging communications between agencies that aid veterans with all related homeless veteran services and benefits. This session will also give attendees the opportunity to provide brief overviews of their programs. Invitees are primarily limited to veteran housing and employment services, and benefits. Veteran Service Organizations' homeless veteran representatives and elected officials are also encouraged to attend to learn how to identify (Mayors' Challenge) our homeless and the resources available to assist them. We will have national and regional subject matter experts to provide current strategies, efforts and funding opportunities.

Therefore if you would like to attend please register at robert.looby@spb.nj.gov. Please include your cell #, website, services provided, and if you would like to have a table for your resource information. Light morning type refreshments will be served. If you have any questions please contact me.

Proposed Federal Spending Cuts

Proposed legislation to rescind affordable housing funding from fiscal years 2015 through 2018 will impact veterans as well as members of the general public.

The Spending Cuts to Expired and Unnecessary Programs Act (HR 3/S.2979) includes almost \$40 million in rescissions from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Public Housing Capital Fund Program, \$40 million from U.S. Department of Agriculture's Section 521 Rental Assistance Program, and \$141 million from the U.S. Department of the

Treasury's Capital Magnet Fund Program. These proposed rescissions will exacerbate the affordable housing crisis across the country.

The rescission specifically targets funding provided by the Public Housing Capital Fund for the Resident Opportunity and Self-Sufficiency (ROSS) program. This important program allows Public Housing Authorities (PHAs) to hire service coordinators who help public housing residents access resources in their communities, improving the outcomes of residents and helping them to gain self-sufficiency. The Trump Administration has highlighted the need for residents to achieve self-sufficiency, so cutting funding for one of the few federal programs able to provide that support is inconsistent with that goal.

The rescission also targets funding for "public housing capital repair needs, emergency repairs including safety and security measures, physical inspections..." This places an unfair burden on the over one million families living in public housing and limits the ability of PHAs to maintain decent, safe, and sanitary living conditions for residents. For instance, it will hinder a PHA's ability to fix leaky roofs, update heating and air conditioning systems, and remove lead paint, which has a disparate impact on children.

Although public housing is a fundamental component of our nation's infrastructure, chronic underfunding has placed the inventory at risk. A 2010 HUD-commissioned study estimated the backlog of deferred maintenance on public housing to be over \$26 billion, with a backlog estimated to grow at a rate of \$3.4 billion per year. Congressional appropriations for the Public Housing Capital Fund have not kept pace with this need; although funding for the Capital Fund was increased by 42 percent in fiscal year 2018 over the previous fiscal year, the \$2.75 billion provided is still well short of the accrual rate. Rescinding the few dollars that are allocated to the Capital Fund will compound an already dire situation.

The proposed cuts to the Section 521 Rental Assistance Program would cause USDA to be unable to fully fund rental assistance contracts for the current fiscal year. This money was intended to be carried over into fiscal year 2018 and supplement the current appropriation and is needed to ensure there are no shortfalls, which would cause significant harm to rural affordable housing providers and residents.

Finally, the proposal rescinds \$141 million from the Capital Magnet Fund, which awards competitive grants to finance affordable housing and community revitalization efforts. To give an example of this program's impact, last year's fiscal year 2017 funding round awarded \$120 million which will enable 40 grantees to serve 41 states and the District of Columbia. Those 40 organizations are projected to create approximately 17,000 additional jobs, produce 21,000 affordable homes and attract more than \$3.2 billion in additional investment in both rural and urban areas. Of that investment, 78 percent or \$2.5 billion is expected to come from the private sector. The Capital Magnet Fund leverages \$12 for every federal dollar invested and gives communities a critical tool to address the affordable housing crisis.

National Housing Trust Fund

On June 5, 2018, the U.S. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) published the FY18 allocations for the national Housing Trust Fund (HTF) in the Federal Register. In total, \$266 million will go to all 50 states, five territories, and Washington D.C. to preserve and create affordable homes.

New Jersey will be allocated \$7,726,000 for 2018. This is about a 35% increase from the amount that New Jersey was allocated in 2017 which was \$5.6 million.

New Jersey needs the funds from the HTF to address the state's affordable homes crisis and increase and preserve rental housing as well as offer home ownership opportunities for low-income families.

The total national 2018 allocations represent a 22% increase from the 2017 allocations and a remarkable 45% increase from the inaugural 2016 allocations. California will receive the largest allocation for 2018, at over \$36 million. New York State will receive over \$22 million.

The 2018 allocations were originally announced in May by HUD's Office of Community Planning and Development (CPD).

CPD also announced the amount that states and local grantees will receive from CPD's grant programs, including Community Development Block Grants and HOME Investment Partnerships Program.

The Housing Trust Fund was created for the purpose of:

- Increasing and preserving the supply of rental housing for extremely low-income families
- Increasing homeownership for the extremely low-income and very low-income families

Contact Governor and Legislative Leaders to Preserve Affordable Housing Trust Funds for Affordable Homes TODAY

The Governor's 2019 proposed state budget diverts the Affordable Housing Trust Fund (AHTF) instead of preserving the AHTF for affordable home production as intended. New Jersey has a housing affordability crisis that simply cannot be ignored.

According to the newly released Out of Reach report, New Jersey is stuck as the sixth most expensive state to rent an apartment. Now more than ever before, New Jerseyans are concerned about housing affordability.

Almost all residents believe the cost of housing is a "very" serious (51 percent) or "somewhat" (35 percent) serious problem. 79 percent of residents say it should be used for its original intention when told that the AHTF has been used to pay for other programs in the state budget in recent years.

Here is sample phone script:

Hello, my name is _____ from _____ and I am calling to express my concern about the proposed budget which diverts all of the funds intended for the Affordable Housing Trust Fund. New Jersey has an urgent housing affordability crisis and diverting dollars intended for housing production perpetuates a problem that hurts our economy. I urge you to fully fund the Affordable Housing Trust Fund as intended to make New Jersey an affordable place everyone can call home.

You can reach Governor Murphy and legislative leaders at the numbers below:

- Gov. Phil Murphy: (609) 292-6000
- Senate President Steve Sweeney: (856) 251-9801
- Assembly Speaker Craig Coughlin: (732) 855-7441

On a related note, New Jersey Assemblywoman Britnee Timberlake (D-34) had sponsored a budget resolution to restore \$46.5 million in funds to the state's Affordable Housing Trust Fund to assist families. The current state budget removed those funds from the State of New Jersey Department of Community Affairs and redirected the funds to the Department of Human Services.

"In America, everyone should be able to afford housing. It is our responsibility as legislators to ensure that this basic necessity remains accessible for our working-class families and those struggling to make ends meet in New Jersey," according to Assemblywoman Timberlake. She went on to add, "I will fight for every dollar in favor of high quality affordable housing for all. That means that here in New Jersey, all funds for workforce housing must stay at the Department of Community Affairs for its intended purpose."

New Jersey's Affordable Housing Trust Fund was designed to assist municipalities, nonprofits and for-profit developers to create homes families can afford, primarily through gap financing when other public subsidies and private financing was insufficient.

New Jersey Gov. Phil Murphy promised during his campaign that he would not raid the Affordable Housing Trust Fund as his predecessor did. However, his budget plan proposes taking \$59 million from the fund for housing-related programs.

The fund is specifically dedicated to creating and rehabilitating affordable homes. Using the funds for other purposes — even important ones — is a practice that started under Gov. Corzine and really was made an art form by Gov. Christie.

Affordable housing advocates are hoping the final budget plan the governor and the legislature will decide on by the end of June will avoid diverting the trust fund money and have it go for its intended use into neighborhoods that need affordable homes.

Ross Rent Plan Threaten Low-Income New Jersey Households

President Trump and House Financial Services Housing and Insurance Subcommittee Vice Chairman Dennis Ross propose a rent plan that will significantly raise the rents of low-income individuals who receive federal rental assistance.

Although their plans differ slightly, both plans have the potential to greatly affect low-income renters in the United States.

Not only would rent be increased for low-income residents, but rental assistance funding could also be cut.

Trump's 2019 budget proposed to cut rental assistance funding by more than \$6 billion below the 2018 funding level.

Trump's plan and the Ross bill could lay the groundwork for additional funding cuts.

FY2019 Transportation and HUD Appropriations Bill Approved by Senate Committee

On June 7, 2018, the U.S. Senate Appropriations Committee approved unanimously (31-0) the FY2019 draft HUD appropriations bill. The Senate bill builds on the 10% increase in HUD

funding that advocates and congressional champions secured in FY 2018. The bill includes \$1.8 billion more than FY2018 enacted levels.

The strong Senate HUD appropriations bill is the direct result of the efforts by housing advocates across the nation and congressional champions Senator Susan Collins (R-ME) and Jack Reed (D-RI).

Overall, the bill provides HUD programs with more than \$12 billion above the president's FY19 request and more than \$1 billion above the House bill. The Senate Committee clearly rejected the calls to drastically cut housing investments – in the form of funding cuts, harmful rent increases, rigid work requirements, and de-facto time limits – proposed by the White House and members of Congress.

The House Appropriations Committee has approved a similar HUD appropriations bill.

Highlights of the bill include:

- \$2.6 billion for homeless assistance grants
- Funding to renew all existing rental assistance contracts and increased funding for about \$22, \$22.8 billion for voucher funding including funding for 7,600 new vouchers for veterans and youth aging out of the foster care system
- \$1.36 billion for the HOME Investment Partnership program
- \$3.37 billion for Community Development Block Grants (CDBG)

According to U.S. Senator Susan Collins (R-Maine), Chair of the Senate Transportation, Housing and Urban Development Committee, “This bipartisan bill is the product of considerable negotiation and compromise. I worked closely with Ranking Member Reed in drafting this bill, and we received input from 70 Senators with more than 800 requests, all of which we carefully evaluated.”

More specifically, Collins claims, “The funding in this legislation will allow us to invest in our nation’s infrastructure, while fully funding the renewal of housing assistance for low-income seniors and other vulnerable populations, such as teenagers and veterans who are homeless.”

While these funding levels in the Senate Appropriations bill are very encouraging, now is the time to continue to advocate that Congress enact the increased funding levels to help end homelessness and create much needed new affordable housing.

Growing Drive for Functional Zero to End Homelessness

Over the past three years, nine U.S. communities have reached a standard known as functional zero for either veteran or chronic homelessness. Thirty-seven other communities have made measurable progress towards that goal.

What makes these communities so unique is how they are accomplishing reaching functional zero: by enhancing entire systems.

- Communities around the country collect real-time data including compiling lists of those who are homeless.
- This data collection enhances the understanding of the ever-changing problem of homelessness.
- These communities link into a national network in order to share their effective strategies and prove their positive performance.

This type of command-center-led coordination effort is what helped eradicate small pox in the United States.

Rockford, Illinois was the first community in the US to reach the functional level zero for ending veteran homelessness and the second community in the country for ending chronic homelessness. Bergen County was the first to end chronic homelessness.

According to Jennifer Jaeger, the Rockford's community services director, "Every person who is homeless in our community that we are aware of goes on our by-name list, which is broken out by subpopulations: chronic, veteran, family, single and youth. Then we get everybody in our community who works on the issue, whether it's veteran or chronic or youth homelessness, and we bring them into a room."

Jaeger adds, "So if we're working on veterans, we'll have the V.A., the local veteran agencies, mental health agencies and substance abuse agencies, and we'll sit down with the list and say: 'O.K., John Smith is No. 1. Who's working with him? How do we get him housed as fast as we can?' And we go literally name by name. It makes a huge difference because they stop being 'the homeless' and become people we all know. And we become very vested in making sure John Smith is housed and safe and has the services he needs to stay housed."

This approach is not only effective, but it brings dignity to those affected by homelessness, by personalizing the approach to help each individual.

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.

Introduced, referred to Assembly Military and Veterans' Affairs Committee 1 /9/2018.

Introduced in the Senate, referred to Senate Military and Veterans' Affairs ommittee3/5/2018.

A4022/S2525 Directs Adjutant General to enter into agreements with legal services organizations to provide legal services to Homeless veterans and veterans at risk of Homelessness.

This bill directs the Adjutant General in the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs, subject to the availability of funds, to enter into agreements with public or private entities to

fund a portion of the legal services such entities provide to homeless veterans and veterans at risk of homelessness related to housing, family law, income support, and criminal defense.

Under the bill, the Adjutant General will ensure that, to the extent practicable, agreements established under this section are made with entities located in the northern, central and southern regions of the State. The legal services will include the following:

(1) Legal services related to housing, including eviction defense, representation in landlord-tenant cases, and representation in foreclosure cases.

(2) Legal services related to family law, including assistance in court proceedings for child support, divorce, estate planning and family reconciliation.

(3) Legal services related to income support including assistance in obtaining public benefits.

(4) Legal services related to criminal defense, including defense in matters symptomatic of homelessness, such as outstanding warrants, fines and driver's license revocation, to reduce recidivism and facilitate the overcoming of reentry obstacles in employment or housing.

(5) Such other legal services as the Adjutant General deems appropriate.

The bill amends the "New Jersey Homeless Veterans Grant Program." This program awards grants, on a competitive basis, to organizations that assist homeless veterans in this State from funds appropriated to the department from the "Homeless Veterans Grant Fund". Under the bill, in addition to the funding appropriated through the New Jersey Homeless Veterans Grant Program, the Adjutant General of the New Jersey Department of Military and Veterans Affairs will enter into agreements with public or private entities to fund a portion of the legal services specified in this bill, that are provided by such entities to homeless veterans and veterans at risk of homelessness.

Under the bill, the Adjutant General may require entities that enter into agreements to submit periodic reports on legal services provided to homeless veterans and veterans at risk of homelessness.

The bill is modeled on federal legislation currently pending in Congress.

Introduced, referred to Assembly Military and Veterans' Affairs Committee 5/24/2018.

Reported from Senate Military and Veterans' Affairs Committee, 2nd Reading and referred to Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee 5/14/2018.

A4089/S2607 Authorizes grants to purchase and rehabilitate abandoned homes for Homeless veterans.

This bill would amend the "New Jersey Housing Assistance for Veterans Act," P.L.2017, c.258 (C.52:27D-516 et seq.) to expand the purposes of the pilot program established by that act to include the purchase and rehabilitation of abandoned homes for homeless veterans. Currently, the pilot program established by this law authorizes grants to eligible nonprofit organizations to rehabilitate existing primary residences of disabled or low-income veterans.

Under the bill, a nonprofit veterans' organization that has experience in rehabilitating housing for homeless veterans, or others, would be eligible to receive a grant to purchase and rehabilitate abandoned homes for homeless veterans. The bill would afford a preference in awarding grants to nonprofit organizations that serve communities that are in the greatest need of homeless services. The bill would allow the administrator of the current pilot

program to give preferences in awarding grants in order to achieve a fair distribution among homeless veterans in different geographical regions of the State.

Finally, this bill adjusts the existing law, through defining “rehabilitation” and other language changes, to clarify that pilot program funds may be expended for a broad range of project types, including repairs, renovations, reconstruction, as well as the installation of appropriate new fixtures and other alterations.

Introduced, referred to Assembly Military and Veterans' Affairs Committee 6/4/2018.

Reported from Senate Military and Veterans' Affairs Committee, 2nd Reading and referred to Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee 6/14/2018.

Ending Veteran Homelessness

We know how to end homelessness among veterans. A growing list of communities across more than 30 states has proven that ending veteran homelessness is possible and sustainable. Urban, suburban, and rural communities alike have proven that we can drive down the number of veterans experiencing homelessness to as close to zero as possible, while also building and sustaining systems that can effectively and efficiently address veterans’ housing crises in the future.

Progress has been driven by urgent action at all levels of government and across all sectors.

- Federal agencies engaged in unprecedented coordination and shared responsibility.
- Congress expanded investments into federal programs, such as the HUD-VA Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) program and the Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) program.
- State and local entities and the philanthropic community aligned investments with federal resources.
- Communities have formed stronger partnerships to deploy those resources through best practices, including coordinated entry and Housing First approaches.
- Governors, mayors, and other public officials have mobilized their communities in support of a clear and ambitious goal.

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