

July 27, 2021

The Honorable Jon Tester
Chairman
Committee on Veterans' Affairs
SR-412 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jerry Moran
Ranking Member
Committee on Veterans' Affairs
SR-412 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Tester, Ranking Member Moran, and distinguished Members of the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs:

As you begin considering veteran bills in earnest for the 117th Congress, we the undersigned organizations, along with the National Coalition for Homeless Veterans (NCHV), urge you to support S. 2172, the *Building Solutions for Veterans Experiencing Homelessness Act of 2021*. The bill would preserve and enhance direly needed COVID-19-related program improvements from both the *Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act* or CARES Act, P.L. 116-136 and *The Johnny Isakson and David P. Roe, M.D. Veterans Health Care and Benefits Improvement Act of 2020*, P.L. 116-315.

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted veterans in unprecedented ways, including by increasing housing and financial instability. With housing as a lagging indicator of economic distress, the impending expiration of the Centers for Disease Control eviction and foreclosure moratorium has more veterans than ever on the verge of homelessness. Veterans cannot afford to wait until after the housing sector is affected for VA to react.

Without the provisions in S. 2172, many entities that are currently providing services for veterans will be unable to continue doing so. Without action, some VA grantees will be forced to make tough financial decisions related to prioritizing COVID safety measures at a financial loss, returning to pre-COVID program occupancy levels, or discontinuing essential shelter and treatment program operations altogether. The bill would reduce the regulatory burden on funding for renovation of shelter for all veterans experiencing homelessness and provide organizations nationwide with the funding and flexibility to provide adequate services to unhoused veterans. Every veteran deserves access to safe shelter and housing, whether they are currently experiencing homelessness or are facing housing-cost burdens that put them at risk of homelessness.

We have a renewed opportunity to continue reducing veteran homelessness nationwide, even with the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the provisions in S. 2172 are critical to our ability to succeed. The bill would allow the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to provide adequate training and technical assistance for its homeless programs and enhance veterans' access to case management services to connect them with the benefits and resources they earned. It would also recognize the impact of the Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Program (HVRP) in connecting veterans with long-term, meaningful jobs. Reporting has shown there is tangible

value added by HVRP in increasing the effectiveness, efficiency, and veteran outcomes of partnered programs.

S. 2172 makes necessary program adjustments to better accommodate homeless veterans with difficulties accessing services, as requested by both VA and service providers. It would expand public transportation for veterans to access care, provide stable housing, and deliver appropriate medical care for aging veterans while they await long-term care placement. Emphasizing continuous improvement, the bill includes an assessment of remaining barriers to securing permanent housing and longer-term program reporting to refine veteran housing outcomes.

This legislation is a testament to the dedication and challenging work of communities nationwide, and the responsiveness of your Committee, its Members and their dedicated staff. We are committed to working with Congress and our partners across the country to end homelessness among veterans and timely passage of S. 2172 will be crucial in this endeavor. Thank you in advance for your consideration and support.

Very respectfully [*the undersigned organizations*],

National Coalition for Homeless Veterans