

TOM COLE
4TH DISTRICT, OKLAHOMA

DEPUTY WHIP

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TRANSPORTATION, HOUSING AND URBAN
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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

November 9, 2023

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Honorable Patrick McHenry
Chairman
House Financial Services Committee
2129 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Honorable Maxine Waters
Ranking Member
House Financial Services Committee
4340 O'Neill HOB
Washington, DC 20515

House Financial Services Committee Member Hearing Day
Statement to be Submitted to the Record—H.R. 4155

I submit the following statement in support of my legislation, H.R. 4155, the Tribal HUD-VASH Act of 2023. This legislation would not only permanently secure the Tribal HUD-VASH program, but also allow tribes to utilize these vouchers within their community, regardless of the housing unit.

The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) created the Tribal HUD-VA Supportive Housing (Tribal HUD-VASH) Program in January 2015 to provide rental assistance and support services to homeless or at-risk Native American veterans living on or near a reservation or other Indian lands. Tribes and Tribally Designated Housing Entities (TDHEs) that are eligible to receive block grants under the Native American Housing Assistance and Self-Determination Act of 1996 (NAHASDA) can apply for these grants. Since then, the program has expanded to 29 tribes and TDHEs. This program is funded annually through appropriations, but has not been authorized in statute.

Native Americans serve in our nation's Armed Forces at five times the national average, with 19% serving since 9/11. Even before they were granted American citizenship in 1924, Native American men and women have served in every major conflict since the Revolutionary War. According to HUD's annual Homelessness Assessment reports, there are 1,034 homeless Native American or Alaska Native veterans and Native Americans and Alaska Natives are overrepresented in the homeless veteran population relative to their share of the veteran population overall.

The Tribal HUD-VASH Act of 2023 permanently authorizes the Tribal HUD-VASH program and allows for the placement of Native veterans in Formula Current Assisted Stock (FCAS) units without a resulting negative impact on a tribe's Indian Housing Block Grant (IHBG). The IHBG is the main HUD formula grant program for tribes since NAHASDA authorization in 1996. Part of this formula includes FCAS units, or all housing developed pre-IHBG that is owned or operated by the tribe or tribal housing authority. Under current guidance,

when a Tribal HUD-VASH voucher is used on a FCAS unit, the tribe or tribal housing authority must take that FCAS unit off their formula total, which decreases their IHBG grant and penalizes the tribe for housing a Native veteran. This disincentivizes tribes from using the program if the only housing available is their FCAS units. Currently there are 90 tribes that have 33,000 FCAS units nationally.

Thank you for your time and consideration and I urge the House Financial Services Committee to swiftly pass H.R. 4155.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Tom Cole", written over a horizontal line.

Tom Cole
Member of Congress
Co-Chair, Congressional Native American Caucus