

Testimony of Representative Marcy Kaptur on H.R. 3180

Chairman Benishek, Ranking Member Brownley, and Members of the Subcommittee, I appreciate the Subcommittee's consideration today of H.R. 3180, and thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on this important legislation.

This bill takes a critical step to address a most unfortunate epidemic of homelessness among our veterans. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development estimates that nearly 60,000 veterans are homeless on any given night, including more than 12,000 veterans of our most recent military involvements. Moreover, about 1.4 million veterans are considered at risk of homelessness.

In a prosperous nation such as ours, this is simply unacceptable. These men and women who did so much in service to our nation deserve better. The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs does provide critical services for our homeless veterans and indeed, all who served. Still, many slip through the cracks.

H.R. 3180 would provide help ensure that number is lower. This legislation is intended to remove the barriers faced by State Veterans Homes in running homeless veterans programs. Many State Homes operate with continued vacancies—beds that could be filled by homeless veterans. Unfortunately, federal requirements can hinder these efforts.

By providing an exemption for State Homes that receive a contract or grant from VA for residential care programs, including homeless veterans programs, we remove disincentives to State Homes to offer homelessness services.

This provision places no requirements on VA to award special treatment in grants and contracts. Nor does it take away from the base services of State Homes in favor of homelessness programs. It simply puts State Homes on a level playing field with other groups providing homeless veterans programs.

As we wind down our military involvements overseas, we face a renewed need to provide the services our veterans have earned. We should be doing everything we can to ensure these services are provided efficiently and effectively. Especially in the tight fiscal constraints we currently face, we must ensure that we are not wasting precious resources. H.R. 3180 takes an important step in that direction and I urge continued favorable consideration of the bill.

Thank you again Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee.