



Statement for the record of the

NATIONAL COALITION
for **HOMELESS VETERANS**

United States House of Representatives
Committee on Veterans' Affairs,
Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity

"Legislative Hearing"

March 30, 2023

Chairman Van Orden, Ranking Member Levin, and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity:

NCHV thanks you for the opportunity to offer views on legislation before the Committee. While there are several great bills today, we are providing statements on behalf of legislation which could directly affect efforts to prevent and or end homelessness among veterans and their families. Legislation such as;

H.R. 645, *The Healthy Foundations for Homeless Veterans Act*

Introduced by Representative Cherfilus-McCormick. Adoption of this bill is of even higher importance in the 118th Congress than it was in the 117th with an impending end of the Public Health Emergency (PHE) slated for May 11th of this year.

This bill codifies and makes permanent the Section 4201 authorities from Public Law 116-315, Johnny Isakson and David P. Roe, M.D. Veterans Health Care and Benefits Improvement Act of 2020 (Isakson/Roe).

NCHV supports this legislation. We know from continued reports from the field that this flexibility on behalf of safety, communications and transportation has had an overall beneficial impact and the Department of Veterans Affairs has also requested these be maintained.

Veterans can get to appointments, better access their supportive services, and they can be contacted and can access telehealth services in remote locations and can access necessities. Using section 4201 authority under Isakson/Roe, VAMCs provided additional services, items like tents, communications, and transportation in the form of bikes and ride shares for tens of thousands of veterans during the public health emergency.

“Preserving the spending category expansions in Section 4201 is particularly helpful when serving the most vulnerable veterans, those who are experiencing literal homelessness. Having the ability to assist with transportation and telecommunication is key to connecting veterans with medical care, employment opportunities and even the search for housing.” States Emmy Hildebrand, CEO of *Helping Veterans and Families (HVAF)* of Indiana, “After the COVID-19 pandemic,

accessing medical care and job opportunities are increasingly reliant on reliable, internet capable devices. Without assistance, many veterans facing homelessness cannot access telehealth opportunities or apply for the jobs available in today's job market."

NCHV again sees a couple of areas specifically where this measure could be enhanced. Inclusion of items such as laptops which can be cheaper and just as versatile as phones in the communications section as well as gift cards specific to food restaurants and groceries would support job readiness and would decrease food insecurity among veterans who lack a place to store and prepare food, respectively.

If we are to move out of this emergency while continuing to decrease veteran homelessness, VA must implement program expansions enacted last Congress, and begin planning to incorporate program changes included in current legislative proposals before the 118th Congress.

Additional Legislation NCHV Supports

H.R. 491, NCHV supports the *Return Home to Housing Act*.

While not included in today's hearing, we believe this legislation worthy of note for future committee consideration. This bill introduced by Representative Nikema Williams (GA-05), is the stand-alone adjustment to the rate of per diem payments provided by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to grantees that provide services to homeless veterans. Organizations providing services directly to veterans stand to see access to reimbursement for those services reduced by over 60% at the end of the PHE.

The effects will be immediate if they are not already being felt, with a reduction of grantees and services provided by those that can remain within the GPD structure. With an impending deadline of May 11th, less than two months from now, NCHV urges the Subcommittee to act with alacrity and recommend H.R. 491 favorably.