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Providing hope, housing, and self-sufficiency for all veterans and their families since 1993.

HVAF of Indiana Statement for the Record
June 14, 2023

HVAF of Indiana, Inc. is the largest non-profit in the State of Indiana dedicated to serving veterans and families facing homelessness. Located in Indianapolis, HVAF has been offering housing, hope and self-sufficiency to veterans and their families since 1993. Last year, 1,265 veterans received life changing, lifesaving assistance at HVAF.

As a Grant and Per Diem and Supportive Services for Veteran Families provider, HVAF has been on the front lines serving the most vulnerable veterans throughout the pandemic. We are deeply concerned about the funding reductions aligned with the end of the public health emergency. I appreciate the opportunity to share my concerns with you today.

The reduction of the GPD rate on May 12 has impacted HVAF's daily operations significantly. The new maximum rate, \$64.52, is not enough to provide high quality, safe and supportive transitional housing for veterans in our community. Since 2019, we have experienced increased personnel costs, utility costs, and maintenance costs. Prior to May 12, HVAF was billing at \$90.12 per day. The reduction resulted in a loss of approximately \$60,000 a month in funding and the following actions have been taken:

1. Reduced onsite evening and weekend security. During the pandemic, HVAF contracted with a veteran owned security company to provide overnight and weekend security at our largest transitional housing facilities, a 45-bed facility, and a 51-bed facility. During the pandemic, we experienced an increase in severe mental illness and substance use and have seen a rise in critical incidents, which include physical aggression, theft, fires, suicidal ideation, etc. The security presence helped ensure the safety of veterans and our staff. On May 12, we ended overnight security and now are only able to offer 12 hours of security on the weekend. We have already had a critical incident since the reduction, where a veteran threatened to blow up the facility after an altercation with another veteran. We called the police, but they refused to remove him citing Indiana tenants' rights laws. Onsite security could have escorted him immediately from the property without putting HVAF staff and other veterans at risk.
2. Several key program staff costs have been shifted to other, temporary grants. These staff are vital to the success of HVAF's transitional housing program. Relying on temporary funding puts the integrity of the program at risk. Staff funded through other sources include:
 - a. GPD Housing Specialist: Responsible for completing Coordinated Entry Assessments, receives all GPD referrals and coordinates move-ins for veterans.
 - b. Therapist/Clinical Coordinator: Responsible for providing supervision of Clinical Housing Team and intensive mental health services for veterans.
 - c. Employment Specialist: Responsible for providing employment assistance to GPD clients.
 - d. 24 Hour On-calls support: This cost is defrayed across all HVAF's grants to meet the GPD requirement of 24-hour staff availability.

3. Effective October 1, HVAF will reduce GPD beds from 121 to 103 to reduce maintenance, utility and personnel costs.

I appreciate the Committee's thorough review of the GPD program and the appropriate level of funding needed to serve the most vulnerable veterans in our nation. I would also encourage the committee to join with providers around the country who are working diligently to end veteran homelessness. Please provide the resources necessary to ensure that no veteran is homeless on our streets.

Emmy Hildebrand
Chief Executive Officer