



Supporting Veteran Families
"Beyond the Battlefield"
Since 2005

June 14, 2023

Chairman Van Orden, Ranking Member Levin, I submit this statement for the record to the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity's Legislative Hearing on behalf of The Veterans Integration Centers in Albuquerque New Mexico. We have provided Grant and Per Diem services in New Mexico since 2005. Our organization currently is operating 42 beds and has the highest successful discharge rate in the Southwest Region. We have worked hand in hand with the Veterans Administration, Department of Veteran Services and other statewide agencies to help address the homeless crisis in our community. New Mexico has one of the highest populations of Veterans in the country and our services are seen as vital.

We thank you for the bipartisan work your Committee partook in to enhance the per diem rate during the public health emergency. During the health emergency, our nightly per diem rate increased to \$121.47 (reflecting actual costs of providing services) per night from our pre-pandemic rate of \$64.52. This additional funding allowed us to expand supportive services to the Veterans we serve, including enhanced case management, substance abuse, mental health and life skill services.

The recent decrease at the end of the PHE dropped our rate to \$64.52. We estimate that this will cost our agency about \$35,000 a month to provide the same level of care we currently provide. For a small agency like ours, this is unsustainable. We have already been forced to make steep cuts in staff and programming in order to attempt to navigate this drastic cut. Despite our efforts, it is clear that we will continue to lose significant dollars if the program is to be maintained, even in a greatly diminished capacity.

We appreciate the intent of H.R. 3848, to restore section 4201 assistance, which has been critical, and to increase the per diem rate to 133%. However; having this ceiling on funding would still require us to keep in place the cuts we already had to make and look at other major cuts in order to sustain the basic tenants of the program. This will, without a doubt, negatively impact our success rates with the Veterans we serve.

We support access to reimbursement in H.R. 491 to allow us to restore levels of services and supports the veterans we serve have earned, and the level of services that are required to successfully operate this grant.

Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at 505-296-0800 or email me at Brock.wolff@nmvic.org

Sincerely,

Brock Wolff, CEO

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