



WRITTEN TESTIMONY

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BEFORE THE

**SUBCOMMITTEES ON HEALTH AND ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

ON

**ASSESSING FEDERAL PROGRAMS AIMED AT REDUCING
VETERANS' HOMELESSNESS**

JANUARY 18, 2018

Chairmen Wenstrup and Arrington, Ranking Members Brownley and O'Rourke, and Members of the Subcommittees:

My name is Angela Williams. I am the President and Chief Executive Officer of Easterseals, a national network of more than 70 leading nonprofit organizations that provide local services and supports to individuals with disabilities, veterans, and other Americans who, with access to essential services and supports, are successfully participating in and contributing to their communities.

Thank you for inviting me to discuss Easterseals' expertise in serving homeless and at-risk veterans and our experience with the U.S. Department of Labor's (DOL) Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Program (HVRP) and other federal programs aimed at reducing veteran homelessness. As a veteran of the U.S. Air Force, I am honored to testify before the U.S. House Veterans' Affairs Subcommittees on Health and Economic Opportunity on this very important topic. We are all indebted to the brave men and women in uniform willing to serve our country proudly.

Easterseals has been actively serving veterans for more than seven decades. Founded in 1919, Easterseals expanded our mission in the 1940s to help address the unmet needs of World War II veterans returning home with service-connected disabilities. Easterseals continues to fill the gap between the services veterans need and the services currently available through government or other sources. Easterseals serves veterans and their families through existing programs, such as assistive technology, respite, and medical rehabilitation. In addition, Easterseals operates employment, care coordination, and other programs that exclusively serve veterans and military families. I am pleased to represent Easterseals' legacy in responding to the needs of veterans experiencing homelessness and unemployment.

STRATEGY TO REDUCE VETERAN HOMELESSNESS IS HAVING AN IMPACT

Today's hearing on veteran homelessness is focused on where we are and where we are headed. However, it is important to remember where we started and the journey we've been on together to this point. In 2010, about the time Easterseals started a new phase in its effort to help homeless veterans, our country's veteran homeless population grew to over 74,000.¹ Today, based on the most recent Point in Time count, veteran homelessness has dropped by nearly 46 percent to about 40,000.

This dramatic reduction in veteran homelessness didn't happen by accident. This progress is a result of the all-hands-on-deck strategy developed by Congress and the federal government. This strategy recognizes that the most effective way to reduce veteran homelessness is to combine the power and resources of the federal government with the on-the-ground capability and scope of state and community partners. The progress is also attributable to the strong collaboration among federal, state, and local partners and the complimentary alignment of federal veteran homeless

¹ U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, [Annual Homeless Assessment Report \(AHAR\)](#)

programs across various federal agencies. It is clear that not one single program or entity can solve veteran homelessness. Rather, it takes the combined strengths, resources, and collaboration of many to impact the lives of homeless veterans and at-risk veterans by helping them to find stable housing and to successfully reintegrate and contribute in their communities.

While we can be proud of our collective accomplishments, there is more work to be done to achieve our shared goal of ending veteran homelessness. Our nation's veterans and their families deserve this commitment and action! Easterseals believes our nation can make even more progress in reducing the number of homeless veterans by enhancing our current public-private partnership model. As I will detail in my testimony, Easterseals asks Congress to improve and expand DOL's Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Program and to maintain the effective collaboration with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) Supportive Services for Veterans Families (SSVF) Program and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and VA Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) Program. In addition, we ask Congress to expand the availability of care coordination and community-based supportive services to proactively address reintegration challenges well before the veteran meets the at-risk definition for existing federal programs.

ENDING VETERAN HOMELESSNESS ONE VETERAN AT A TIME

Allow me to share with you a story that brings life to our programs. Paula is one of the homeless, unemployed veterans who is now contributing to her community as a result of the effective response and collaboration among veteran programs and community partners. Paula proudly served in the U.S. Air Force before being honorably discharged in 1986. Her post-military life includes many challenges and bad decisions that led to a failed marriage and a felony conviction. Paula made a commitment to herself to positively change her life, hoping a move from California to New York would help jump-start her new beginning. Finding a job immediately after her move was key to her transition. However, she struggled to find a job due to her criminal background and other employment barriers, including her age.

Out of money and without any other support in her new city, the 66-year-old entered a women's homeless shelter. After learning she was a veteran, the shelter connected Paula to a local SSVF provider, who began working with Paula to help her find stable housing. When Paula explained her desire to find employment, the SSVF provider referred her to Easterseals New York, which operates two HVRP grants (New York City and Syracuse) and specializes in helping homeless veterans and older adults find employment. Easterseals' HVRP team met with Paula to learn about her employment goals. Based on her skills and past employment background, Paula expressed interest in customer service. She also identified her lack of access to transportation and interview clothing as additional barriers to obtaining employment.

The Easterseals employment specialist worked with Paula to update her resume and prepared her for potential interviews. An Easterseals social worker helped Paula obtain, through HVRP funds, an appropriate interview wardrobe and subway cards to get to job interviews. While Easterseals was fast at work to help her find a job, the local SSVF provider, Help USA, was successful in getting Paula connected with a HUD-VASH housing voucher. Paula had renewed hope and purpose, going between housing appointments for her HUD-VASH voucher and job interviews.

Paula first found a place to live. Thanks to the generous support of a private donor, Easterseals was able to provide Paula with resources to start furnishing her apartment. In November of 2017, just three months after enrolling in HVRP, Paula successfully interviewed for a Customer Service Representative position at the New York location of a major national staffing company. She is working full-time and earning \$19.00 per hour. Until she received her first paycheck, Easterseals provided her with a 30-day unlimited subway card to assist her with transportation to and from work. Paula is now successfully reintegrated into society, contributing and making a difference. She found success locally, all as a result of multiple local organizations working together with federal veteran homeless programs. Her story, and the behind-the-scenes work of federal, state, and local partners, exemplifies why we must strengthen and build from our country's homeless veteran strategy – representing promise for the 40,000 other homeless veterans nationwide who can benefit from community-based supports.

EASTERSEALS ASSISTS HOMELESS VETERANS FIND EMPLOYMENT

Easterseals is participating in our country's effort to reduce veteran homelessness by helping homeless veterans find jobs. Easterseals is a leading national provider of employment services, specializing in helping job seekers with significant barriers to employment find success in the workplace. Our experience in serving individuals with disabilities and other most-in-need job seekers made us a natural and effective partner to help homeless veterans and veterans at risk of homelessness to find jobs and stable housing. We are pleased to be testifying today alongside one of our partners, the National Coalition for Homeless Veterans (NCHV). We work with NCHV to provide education and training to homeless veteran service providers to assist them in serving homeless and at-risk veterans with disabilities.

Understanding the important role employment plays in helping veterans transition out of homelessness, Congress authorized the Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Program in 1987 as the only federal nationwide program focused exclusively on the employment of homeless veterans.² Easterseals began our partnership with DOL's Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS) in 2009 to help veterans experiencing homelessness return to the labor force. Easterseals affiliates located in Oregon and Maryland secured DOL VETS grants to help at-risk veterans find jobs. Today, Easterseals affiliates operate 11 HVRP grants serving veterans in Indiana, Maine, Maryland, New Hampshire, New York, Ohio, Oregon, Virginia, and the District of Columbia. During the last program year, Easterseals provided HVRP employment and support services to nearly 1,200 homeless or at-risk veterans, of whom more than 61 percent found employment during the year with an average wage of \$13.99 per hour.

Easterseals has helped homeless and at-risk veterans from across the country to find jobs through HVRP. Building from the HVRP model, we have found that our successful programs include four important elements: veteran-centered approach, effective community connections, strong employer engagement, and access to emergency financial support.

1. **Veteran-Centered Approach to Employment Services:** Easterseals uses a person-centered approach to all of our employment services. Our employment specialists

² Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act, [P.L. 100-77](#)

meet individually with jobseekers to identify their goals, skills, talents, and work history so they can be connected to the training and supports they need to achieve success in the workplace. Our HVRP team in Cincinnati, which includes Chairman Wenstrup's congressional district, is staffed by four U.S. Army veterans who regularly tap into their own service and transition experiences to assist veterans who enroll in Easterseals Serving Greater Cincinnati's HVRP program.

This person-centered approach is effective in working with homeless and at-risk veterans. Every veteran seeking employment and other supports comes to HVRP from different backgrounds and life experiences. We work extensively to build a trusting relationship and rapport with the veterans, which allows us to better assist them in identifying their needs and goals. Paula entered the program self-motivated with a clear sense of where she wanted to go. In our initial meeting, we were able to work with her on an employment strategy, which she used to find a job within three months. For a young female veteran we recently served, also in New York, the HVRP team met several times before we gained her trust. After several appointments, she opened up about her military sexual trauma while on active duty in the U.S. Army and her recent struggles living out of her car in sub-zero temperatures. This initial assessment and enrollment process represents the critical foundation from which employment services and other supports are identified and delivered. This process is very different based on each veteran and their needs.

- 2. Community Connection and Collaboration:** Easterseals recognizes that a veteran and his or her family are best served when they are connected to and can benefit from the full strength and alignment of the community they call home. Easterseals works closely with community partners to ensure that the unique and evolving needs of veterans are met effectively. While we specialize in employment services, Easterseals affiliates who serve veterans through HVRP or other programs may also employ licensed social workers, care coordinators, and counselors who can work with veterans to directly meet their needs or to connect them to other federal homeless programs and existing supports at another local organization.

Easterseals New Hampshire has a long history of serving veterans and National Guard and Reserve Members through community care coordination, employment, and mental health and substance abuse treatment. In 2016, Easterseals New Hampshire became a statewide HVRP provider, working closely with the state's SSVF providers and VA supportive housing case managers to provide optimal veteran care and support. In addition, Easterseals New Hampshire collaborates with other state and community partners, including the New Hampshire Office of

Veterans Services, Vet Centers, American Job Centers (AJC), housing shelters, local VFW, DAV, and American Legion chapters, Homeland Heroes, among others.

It was because of such community connections that John, a New Hampshire veteran, received the support he needed to get his life back on track. A veteran of the U.S. Navy, John was living in a veterans-only shelter following completion of in-patient substance abuse treatment. The shelter referred John to Easterseals New Hampshire, where he was assigned a Care Coordinator, working under a private health insurance contract, to focus on improving his overall health and well-being while also decreasing his emergency room visits. During this engagement, John expressed a deep desire to find and maintain employment, which had always been a struggle given his past substance abuse problems and transportation challenges after losing his license. Easterseals connected John internally to its HVRP team, where an Easterseals employment specialist worked with John to update his resume, to enroll him in a regular Job Club, and to boost his job search skills. On a path toward employment, John was referred by Easterseals to other local providers to help him find temporary housing, get mental health treatment, and assist him with money management. After an aggressive job search, John was recently hired as a floor technician where he has earned the respect of his boss and coworkers. John is doing well and saving for a car and an apartment thanks to the coordinated community response and the behind-the-scenes support of federal veteran homeless program funds.

Easterseals Oregon assists homeless and at-risk veterans in Multnomah, Marion, Polk, Jackson, and Josephine Counties as both a HVRP and SSVF provider. Easterseals Oregon's HVRP staff regularly connects most-in-need veterans to other state and community partners to help them achieve their reintegration goals. The Oregon program's co-location with the Oregon Employment Department and its day-to-day collaboration with Disabled Veteran Outreach Program (DVOP) specialists have produced strong results. During the last program year, 96 percent of the veterans participating in the Portland (OR) HVRP grant were connected to the local VA benefits office, 93 percent were co-enrolled with the local AJC, and 55 percent were connected to other community supportive services. Their community collaboration and connections provide homeless and at-risk veterans with seamless access to the supports they need to be successful.

3. **Regular Employer Engagement:** Easterseals' success in helping homeless veterans find employment relies on an engaged employer community. Easterseals affiliates specializing in employment services, including those that operate HVRP grants,

regularly engage private and public sector employers throughout the job search and placement process through Business Advisory Councils or other community-based outreach activities.

In Oregon, A&M Transport, G4S Security, and the City of Portland have been strong partners, assisting our HVRP and other employment programs by hosting mock job interviews and job shadowing opportunities for job seekers, sharing their employment and training needs with our employment teams, and, ultimately, hiring homeless veterans and other job seekers. Easterseals Serving Greater Cincinnati works regularly with more than 40 local employers, including Jancoa, Shelterhouse, and Nehemiah Manufacturing, to assist and hire HVRP veterans. Our affiliate that assists homeless veterans from Maryland, Virginia, and the District of Columbia conducts outreach and site visits throughout the year with businesses in the region. Easterseals Serving DC | MD | VA's focus on business engagement has resulted in strong hiring relationships with security firms and other major employers and small businesses, including a local Jiffy Lube that is veteran-owned and has prioritized the hiring of homeless and formerly incarcerated veterans. Our affiliate in Maine plays a leadership role on state and veteran-specific workforce development boards. Through its recent HVRP grant, Easterseals Maine has developed strong local business ties that lead to job training and placement opportunities for homeless veterans. For example, the HVRP team developed an apprenticeship program with the Shipyard Brewery for a Brew Master position in collaboration with the GI Bill. In New York, Easterseals holds quarterly training workshops for employers in Syracuse and New York City on the benefits of hiring veterans. Through HVRP, they often work with businesses including, Rite Aid, Home Depot, Ryder Transportation, Spectrum Cable, Macy's, Pratt Institute, First Quality Maintenance, Levy Restaurants, Bay City Auto, and JP Morgan Chase.

4. **Emergency Financial Assistance:** A single unexpected expense or bill can immediately derail a veteran's path toward reintegration success. Easterseals appreciates that federal homeless veteran programs, including HVRP and SSVF, recognize this risk and allow federal funds to be used to address certain emergency situations. For example, Easterseals helped Paula, the veteran from New York, with a subway card using HVRP funds to ensure she could get to and from job interviews. This small HVRP investment paid off as evidenced by Paula securing a job through one of those interviews.

However, the needs of homeless and at-risk veterans often far exceeds the resources available through HVRP or other public funds. Easterseals works nationally and

locally to connect with other nonprofits and private funders to fill this growing gap. Easterseals Serving DC | MD | VA partners with the Salvation Army, Red Cross, Volunteers of America, and other charitable organizations in their community to assist veterans with subway and bus passes, gas cards, and other emergency needs. Easterseals New Hampshire created Veterans Count, a private donations-based fund that is used to meet the temporary, emergency financial needs of veterans and military families. Veterans Count is now active in Connecticut, Kansas, Maine, New Hampshire, New York, North Carolina, Rhode Island, and Vermont. These funds help stabilize housing needs, pay for work clothing or tools, and cover costs to obtain vital documents such as identification cards, birth certificates, and military service records, such as a DD Form 214.

Nationally, Easterseals has worked with a private donor for the last five years to meet the unique needs of female veterans, including emergency financial support. Last year, we saw a huge spike in need following the hurricanes. Lisa, who served eight years in the U.S. Marine Corps, was one of the veterans who reached out to Easterseals after her Houston home was flooded during Hurricane Harvey. Easterseals was able to provide Lisa with timely assistance that allowed her and her family to get into a temporary apartment while they rebuild their home. In 2017 alone, more than 1,500 female veterans—several impacted by hurricanes—received care management services, with more than 100 provided emergency financial assistance, through the generosity of this Easterseals donor.

HVRP REPRESENTS A POSITIVE RETURN ON INVESTMENT

Federal investments in programs such as HVRP, SSVF, and HUD-VASH are paying off with the dramatic reduction in veteran homelessness since 2010. This is especially true with DOL's Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Program. About 17,000 veterans receive services through HVRP under current funding levels. Despite serving the chronically homeless or hardest to serve veterans, HVRP exceeded its employment placement rate for the last program years.³ The average \$2,500 cost per participant, based on DOL's program year 2018 target, is more than paid for when veterans secure employment through the program.

Earlier, I told you about Paula, the Air Force veteran from New York. She came to HVRP seeking employment but had significant barriers to employment, including a criminal conviction and gaps in her work history. Through the supports and services available through HVRP, Paula is now earning approximately \$3,000 a month, well over the average HVRP cost per person (based on her full-time, \$19 per hour customer service job). She is a taxpayer, contributing back to the community that helped her get back on her feet.

³ U.S. Department of Labor, FY 2018 [Congressional Budget Justification](#)

We are finding similar HVRP success across the country. Through the Veterans with Families HVRP grant that Easterseals operates locally, 78 veterans from Maryland, Virginia, and the District of Columbia were enrolled in the program last year, 66 of whom found jobs, with an average starting wage of \$20.42 per hour. In New Hampshire, which serves high percentages of chronically homeless, 45 of the 77 HVRP enrolled veterans were placed into employment with an average hourly wage of about \$10.00 per hour. Easterseals Crossroads provides HVRP services in the eight county area surrounding Indianapolis (IN). Last program year, 107 of the 153 homeless veterans in Easterseals Crossroads' program found employment, with an average hourly wage of \$13.04. In Syracuse (NY), 49 of the 76 veterans who enrolled in HVRP during the last full program year exited for employment, averaging \$11.99 per hour. In Oregon, 56 of the 95 veterans from Salem and Marion and Polk Counties found jobs within the year with an average hourly wage of \$14.32.

In each example, the veterans who were experiencing homelessness and joblessness earned, on average, more in their first couple months of employment than the program invested in them, based on the national HVRP cost per veteran. And based on a 2016 independent HVRP review, the mean hourly wages of HVRP participants rose by more than 13 percent over the program years analyzed, from \$10.21 in 2009 to \$11.55 in 2013.⁴ HVRP and its companion housing-first federal programs represent a positive return on their public investment.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SUPPORTING HOMELESS VETERANS

Easterseals strongly believes that the federal response to veteran homelessness has been strong and effective by engaging on-the-ground, community partners. Easterseals asks Congress to consider the following recommendations to help strengthen federal homeless veteran programs to make them even more effective.

1. **Support Full Funding and a Long-Term Extension of HVRP:** Easterseals appreciates the bipartisan support in Congress for HVRP and the current legislative efforts to help accomplish our HVRP authorization and funding goals. Easterseals supports H.R. 4451, the Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Programs Reauthorization Act of 2017, that was introduced in November by Health Subcommittee Chairman Wenstrup and Ranking Member Brownley. Among other things, the bill would extend HVRP through fiscal year (FY) 2022 at \$50 million a year. In the past, HVRP has been extended one year at a time. A multi-year extension would demonstrate Congress' commitment to the employment needs of homeless and at-risk veterans. Easterseals also wants to thank Economic Opportunity Subcommittee Member Kathleen Rice of New York for her work with Representative Greg Walden of Oregon on a bipartisan effort the last two years to boost HVRP funding. This effort was supported by several members of these distinguished subcommittees. Increased funding would allow DOL to expand the HVRP grant size to provide more resources for retention and other services, such as training, when necessary, to meet

⁴ 2016 Evaluation of the Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Program; [Avar Consulting, Inc.](#)

the employment goals of our veterans.

REQUEST: Easterseals urges Congress to approve a multi-year extension for HVRP (as proposed in H.R. 4451) and to raise the non-defense discretionary budget caps and fund HVRP in FY 2018 at no less than \$47.5 million, as recommended in the U.S. House funding bill for DOL.

2. **Expand Eligibility of HVRP Services:** Veterans receiving housing support through SSVF or HUD-VASH are not considered homeless for purposes of HVRP. As a result, these veterans are unable to benefit from HVRP employment services, even though the veteran may be unemployed or underemployed. Therefore, Easterseals supports the changes in H.R. 4451 and its companion bill in the U.S. Senate (S. 1473) that would expand HVRP eligibility to veterans who receive housing assistance through federal homeless programs and who are transitioning from being incarcerated. In addition, we have found inconsistency with what is considered imminently at risk of losing housing or employment. With proper and common-sense documentation, veterans who have fallen behind in rent, especially after losing a job, should be considered imminently at risk and eligible for HVRP employment services. Finally, Easterseals wants to highlight the growing employment and housing needs of some National Guard and Reserve Members who, based on their status, are not eligible for HVRP services.

REQUEST: Easterseals urges Congress to expand eligibility of HVRP to include other at-risk veterans. Easterseals supports the changes proposed in H.R. 4451. In addition, we ask Congress to include a new section within H.R. 4451 to ensure that all veterans who are imminently at risk of losing their housing or employment are eligible for HVRP services.

- **AMEND H.R. 4451 by INSERTING the following after section 2(c)(4):**
“(5) veteran who will imminently lose his or her housing or employment without intervention services. Imminent housing risk can include documented default in rent or mortgage or eviction notices. Imminent employment risk can include probationary periods, poor performance reviews or other employment warnings.”

3. **Increase HVRP Grant Size to Provide Dedicated Resources for Retention and Other Services:** DOL, in its most recent congressional budget justification, accurately described what Easterseals HVRP providers are seeing on-the-ground when enrolling veterans into the program. DOL noted: “Even though the homeless

veteran population has significantly decreased since 2009, those remaining homeless veterans consist of the chronically homeless or hardest to serve.”⁵ Veterans with significant barriers to employment, such as addiction and mental health challenges, criminal backgrounds, and chronic homelessness, require more costly and intensive services to help them find employment success. Easterseals Serving Greater Cincinnati, which includes parts of Chairman Wenstrup’s district, recently assisted a veteran with significant barriers. After leaving the military in 2014, Jason struggled with a divorce and its impact on his relationship with his children. He turned to alcohol, which led to his trouble with the law. When Easterseals connected with him, he had served his jail time and completed alcohol treatment. We met with Jason to identify his employment goals and worked with him for several months before he landed a job in an area he is passionate about: physical fitness. He works at a gym where he mentors others on becoming healthy and improving their fitness. He has also focused on his own health and well-being and has been sober since he was released from jail.

Our work with veterans, like Jason, doesn’t end when they are successful in finding a job. It represents just one part of a journey. We check in regularly and are available to assist Jason and all of the veterans we work with through HVRP to help address challenges that may arise following their employment. These ongoing retention costs will also increase in serving the hardest-to-serve, chronically homeless veterans. One Easterseals HVRP team leader said, “due to the very nature of these veterans’ histories and severity of need, those who obtain employment often subsequently lose it or are put on probation and need assistance due to reoccurring issues, such as substance abuse, and require costly intensive and individualized services.” A 2017 national homeless study affirmed the need to prioritize job retention and reemployment services, especially for jobseekers with significant barriers to employment.⁶ Also, our affiliates find it difficult to deploy appropriate staff and resources in rural areas given the limited grant sizes. Even with the recent grant ceiling increase, the HVRP grant amount fails to meet “the costs of serving each homeless individual,” as concluded by the recent HVRP evaluation.⁷

REQUEST: Easterseals urges Congress to support an increase in the urban and rural grant amounts to address the growing and evolving needs of homeless veterans enrolled in the program. In particular, Easterseals

⁵ U.S. Department of Labor FY 2018 [Congressional Budget Justification](#)

⁶ Integrating Rapid Re-Housing and Employment , [Heartland Alliance 2017 Study](#)

⁷ Evaluation of the Homeless Veterans’ Reintegration Program, [Avar Consulting, Inc. Study](#), 2016

recommends additional funding for retention, rural outreach and services, and for expanded intensive case management.

4. Include Greater HVRP Flexibility to Better Match the Needs of Veterans:

Greater program flexibility is sometimes needed to help HVRP providers effectively address the unique needs of homeless and at-risk veterans. DOL measures HVRP grant providers on the number of veterans who attain a training credential. Easterseals helps veterans develop new skills and credentials by connecting them to specialized training that includes security, commercial driver's license (CDL), medical coding, information technology, and nursing. However, the training performance requirement often runs counter to the immediate, sometimes desperate, need of the veteran to find employment quickly to maintain housing or other needs. The needs of each veteran should be the primary factor for the type of services and training required to achieve employment. In another example, an Easterseals affiliate was working with a homeless veteran who, after securing a job, needed transportation assistance until she received her first paycheck. HVRP could cover subway or bus passes, but not toll fares (by adding resources to the veteran's E-Z Pass card) even though her car, based on her job's location, was the better transportation option. Also, in some communities that lack available transitional or affordable housing, the prohibition on using HVRP funds to pay for rent or housing deposits delays or prevents a veteran's ability to meet his or her goal.

REQUEST: Easterseals recommends that Congress support greater flexibility within HVRP, on a case-by-case basis, to address the individualized needs of homeless and at-risk veterans. In addition, Easterseals recommends the following report language to H.R. 4451.

- **INSERT the following language in the H.R. 4451 report:**
“The Committee recognizes the individualized barriers and unique challenges faced by veterans who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. As such, the Committee provides the Secretary of Labor the authority to waive a rule, on a case-by-case basis, if a waiver greatly improves the veteran’s ability to find stable housing and to become gainfully employed.”

5. Expand Early Access to Community Care Coordination to Address Veteran Reintegration Needs:

The community care coordination and case management model used in HVRP is the foundation of HVRP. The community-based, holistic approach ensures veterans and their families have access to a continuum of care that

is local, timely, and effective. Not all veterans who could benefit from community care coordination have access to these services. Providing veterans with access to care coordination and supportive services earlier in the process will, based on our experience in the field, address the problems before they turn into a crisis, saving time, heartache, and money. Congress should consider ways to expand federally funded community care coordination or case management to proactively meet the challenges of veterans well before they meet the homeless and unemployed eligibility criteria of programs like HVRP and SSVF.

REQUEST: Easterseals recommends that Congress create a pilot program at the VA that uses this holistic model to address the reintegration needs of veterans, including those in rural areas with limited access to other supports, who would otherwise not qualify for existing federal veteran homeless or employment programs.

CONCLUSION

Easterseals appreciates Congress' commitment to and investments in public-private partnerships and community-based solutions to respond to veteran homelessness. Together, we have improved the lives of thousands of America's veterans who are now living, working and contributing to their communities. Thank you for considering Easterseals' views. I look forward to your questions.