



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 Volunteers of America of Los Angeles which has provided Grant and Per Diem services in Los Angeles County, California since 2005. Our organization currently is operating 133 number of beds and was selected to be a part of the national VA pilot project of the Low Demand model in 2015.

The performance outcomes in our program in the last two years demonstrate that we have found an approach that works with this service-resistant population: Of the 105 homeless Veterans served with an average length of stay of 15 months, the percentage of negative exits was 18.98% (compared to the GPD program goal of no more than 20%), and the percentage of Veterans discharged to permanent housing was 62.92% (compared to the GPD minimum program goal of 60%).

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 \$149.73 per night from our pre-pandemic rate of \$54.89. This allowed us to keep veterans safe by housing them in hotels during COVID outbreaks at our sites. We also used the funds to increase our sanitation efforts. We were able to have a steady stock of PPE, cleaning supplies, and periodically have deep cleanings of the facilities by outside vendors. The funds allowed for increased security on site and clinical services to support veterans toward moving into permanent housing.

The recent decrease at the end of the PHE dropped our rate to \$64.52. This has required us to reduce our transportation options for veterans. This was a much-needed service due to some veteran not having a reliable means of transportation. Meal quality has also changed due to having less funds. Being able to order special meals for veterans with more restrictive diets was easy to accommodate with the additional funds and now that will be a challenge.

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 decrease services, meals, and go broke trying to provide the best quality services to veterans experiencing homelessness.

We support the access to reimbursement in **H.R. 491** to allow us to restore levels of services and supports earned by the veterans we serve. This is the level of services required to successfully operate this grant.

Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact us at (213) 500-7689 or taunyataylor@voala.org.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Taunya Taylor". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Taunya Taylor, LCSW
Clinical Operations Director
Veteran Services