

# NATIONAL COALITION *for* HOMELESS VETERANS

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December 15, 2019

Kenneth C Holt  
Secretary of Housing and Community Development  
7800 Harkins Road  
Lanham, MD 20706

Dear Secretary Holt,

We appreciate the detailed additions to the Maryland QAP for 2020 that support increased PSH housing developments; however, additional affordable and permanent supportive housing for veterans would accelerate progress on ending veteran homelessness statewide. Since 2011, Maryland has seen a 29.6 percent decrease in veteran homelessness, as compared to a 43.4 percent decrease nationally and decreases of 54.6, 64.3 and 78 percents in West Virginia, Georgia, and New York, respectively. We know housing ends homelessness and respectfully ask that the State of Maryland commit resources to ending veteran homelessness by increasing the priority for veterans permanent supportive housing and developments.

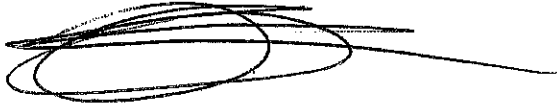
Virginia and Delaware, two of the states that neighbor Maryland, have already achieved the federal benchmarks and criteria for ending veteran homelessness. Lessons learned from their experiences can be applied in Maryland to also meet this benchmark. For example, Delaware listed veterans as the first target population in their 2019 QAP prioritization. We urge Maryland to make technical and funding commitments to prioritize this goal. Veterans appear last on the list of state priorities for competitive funding, though they are one of the largest populations that the state has made a commitment to addressing.

Fellow commenters in previous listening sessions raised the point that set-asides should be directed to localities that have a master plan in place directly addressing affordable housing development. We agree. Taking this one step further, NCHV recommends that set-asides should not only be directly made to local municipalities that have funding and planning mechanisms in place to promote affordable development, but that bonus points should be awarded when those funding and planning mechanisms address specific priority populations. For example, the Baltimore master plan has directly outlined a timeline for ending homelessness and commits to delivering 300 units or more annually that target specific populations like people experiencing homelessness, seniors, and disabled individuals. When local jurisdictions step up their commitments, the state should absolutely support them in meeting targeted goals to provide for the lowest, most vulnerable Marylanders.

We also request a revision to Section 4.4.2 of the Multifamily Rental Financing Program Guide, related to housing for Targeted Populations. We support the 25% set-aside exception for a greater percentage of unit set-asides for veteran housing via EUL projects or those that offer permanent supportive housing to persons experiencing homelessness. However, for other developments that may support needs in the veteran community, the maximum award is still 10 points. In an effort to promote more affordable housing development and to incentivize developers to set aside additional units for priority populations, we request that you allow other projects designed to serve homeless veterans to be eligible up to the 25% threshold in this category. The increase in federal investment for rapid re-housing as a solution to veteran homelessness requires additional units; thus, we request that you modify the QAP to award bonus points on the basis of the quantity of units brought to the market. The additional incentive would encourage developers to prioritize this work toward our shared vision of ending veteran homelessness statewide.

We look forward to working with you and your colleagues to ensure that every Marylander has a place to call home.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kathryn Monet', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Kathryn Monet  
Chief Executive Officer