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November 17, 2017

The Honorable David Shulkin  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs  
810 Vermont Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Secretary Shulkin:

We are writing out of concern for the two million veterans living in the state of California and the nearly 22 million veterans nationwide. Our offices are troubled by the potential impact of the September 22, 2017 memorandum from the Acting Under Secretary for Health of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) regarding the realignment of Specific Purpose Fund line items to General Purpose Funds, particularly its impact on the Housing and Urban Development-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) program.

The funding realignment proposed in the September 22<sup>nd</sup> memorandum could result in the removal of funding for HUD-VASH program case management, the lynchpin component of the programmatic partnership between HUD and the VA. Case management funding is crucial in combatting veteran homelessness and ensuring that veterans can retain affordable, stable housing and access the services and care to which they are entitled. As representatives of the largest population of homeless veterans in the country, we urge you to consider the effects this budgetary change could have on veterans facing homelessness and housing insecurity in our districts.

We also urge the VA to consider whether such a funding realignment would comply with the statutory requirements governing the HUD-VASH program. According to VA 38 USC 2003(b), the VA must ensure adequate funding to guarantee that every veteran in the HUD-VASH program has access to and is able to see a case manager. Removing or realigning funding may jeopardize the VA's compliance with statutory requirements if caseload ratios become unmanageable at a time when the needs of homeless veterans are still overwhelming.

According to the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority's 2017 Homeless Count, 4,828 veterans in Los Angeles County live on the streets or in shelters on any given night, a 57% increase from 2016. But the programs to house our veterans are working; from 2015-2016, 7,353 veterans were placed into permanent housing in Los Angeles County. Changes to the long-term funding of the HUD-VASH program risks the housing stability of nearly 7,000 veterans in Los Angeles who


are currently serviced through the program. These housed veterans represent a successful partnership between local programs and federal funding. We cannot afford to roll back these gains.

The HUD-VASH program serves not only to help reduce housing barriers, but also medical emergencies and challenges. A recent study showed that enrolling veterans in the HUD-VASH program reduced ER visits by 27% and lowered intensive inpatient costs by 54%. The HUD-VASH program houses vets who need a stable, affordable home, and reduces healthcare costs for the VA.

Los Angeles continues to aggressively address veteran homelessness and housing insecurity. The City and County of Los Angeles have committed substantial funding resources over the next ten years to strengthen their coordinated efforts to manage the shortage of permanent supportive housing and gaps in services for the homeless. The VA is a vital partner in this endeavor; the VA funding for housing and wrap-around services are essential for helping veterans experiencing homelessness and housing insecurity in our Congressional districts.

We request that Secretary Shulkin both reverse the directive to realign the HUD-VASH Case Management funding to General Funds and that he commit to continue the long-term stability and funding for veteran homeless programs.

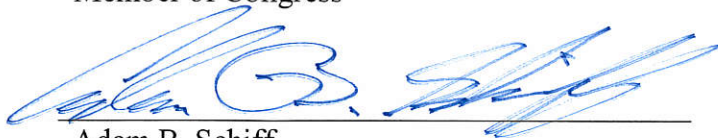
Sincerely,

  
Nanette Diaz Barragán  
Member of Congress

  
Lucille Roybal-Allard  
Member of Congress

  
Grace F. Napolitano  
Member of Congress


  
Linda T. Sánchez  
Member of Congress


  
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Member of Congress

  
Ted W. Lieu  
Member of Congress



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Karen Bass  
Member of Congress



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Brad Sherman  
Member of Congress