

January 24, 2014

Honorable Terry McAuliffe
Office of the Governor
Patrick Henry Building, 3rd Floor
1111 East Broad Street
Richmond, Virginia 23219

Dear Gov. McAuliffe:

On behalf of Volunteers of America Chesapeake, I want to offer our congratulations and any assistance we may be able to provide as you assume your new responsibilities. I am writing today specifically about the Virginia Housing Trust Fund (HTF).

As you know, the prior Administration included full funding for the HTF in its proposed FY14-15 state budget. We want you to know how much this program matters to our efforts to address the desperate need for affordable housing statewide – and to urge your strong support for the HTF.

Volunteers of America, the largest provider of homeless services in Northern Virginia, is a faith-based, non-profit organization whose mission is to inspire self-reliance, dignity and hope through health and human services. With 31 programs across Virginia, Maryland and the District of Columbia, Volunteers of America Chesapeake annually helps nearly 11,000 people in need, including the homeless; individuals with mental illness or intellectual disabilities; and those in need of affordable housing, recovering from substance abuse addiction or involved in community corrections. We particularly seek to assist military veterans grappling with homelessness, substance abuse or mental health challenges. Each year, we shelter 1800 homeless men, women and children while making permanent supportive housing opportunities available to many of our existing clients. Our track record for productivity and efficiency has made many of our programs national models.

For our work locally to assist the homeless and near-homeless, no state investment is more critical than the Housing Trust Fund. The non-profit community was thrilled two years ago when Virginia created and funded the HTF at \$7 million; and then again the next year when the program was more formally codified and augmented by an additional \$1 million. The first round of grants and loans under the program has been an unqualified success, already yielding a return on this investment in both human and financial terms. Given the magnitude of the housing challenges facing Virginians, however, this is just a good start toward reducing chronic homelessness statewide.

As your Administration considers priorities for the biennial budget, we want to add our voice to the chorus in support of building on this success by retaining HTF's current funding level of \$8 million. Regrettably, the demand for affordable housing in Virginia is soaring but the HTF has now proven its value and cost-efficiency. As you weigh state budget options over the next few weeks, we respectfully request that you prioritize the Housing Trust Fund.

Please let me know if Volunteers of America Chesapeake can provide any further background and thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Franklyn Baker".

Franklyn Baker
Chief of Staff and External Affairs Officer

Cc: Russell K. Snyder, President/CEO