



Volunteers
of America®

CHESAPEAKE

Called to Care™

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October 15, 2013

U.S. Senator Ben Cardin
509 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Cardin:

On behalf of Volunteers of America Chesapeake, and the thousands of needy area residents we serve daily, I am writing to urge a swift resolution of the ongoing federal government shutdown. The impact on non-profit services in communities across Virginia, Maryland and the District of Columbia is serious and worsening – and the significant costs of this disruption will ultimately fall on taxpayers. If exacerbated by failure to raise the debt ceiling, our capacity to provide human services will be further compromised. We are encouraged by reports of new progress toward an agreement and implore you to help forge that consensus.

We are a faith-based, non-profit organization whose mission is inspire self-reliance, dignity and hope through health and human services. Nationally, Volunteers of America is one of the nation's largest and most comprehensive human services organizations. 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. To maximize our positive impact, our 700-person staff works with more than 2,000 volunteers and coordinates our efforts with numerous other local agencies and organizations.

Many of our programs are recognized as national models, including the just-opened reentry center for federal ex-offenders in East Baltimore and residential facility for low-income seniors with chronic mental illness in Arlington County. We particularly seek to assist military veterans grappling with homelessness, substance abuse or mental health challenges. We have track record of operating all these programs in a productive and cost-efficient manner.

Under the best of circumstances, this is a challenging mission. An extended government shutdown would make it almost impossible to sustain. The specific impact varies with different programs but the shutdown will disrupt our work under Medicaid, CHIP, TANF, HOPWA, SNAP, HUD rental assistance, Veterans Supportive Housing, as well as foster care and child support programs.

In the District of Columbia, this is further complicated by the unique federal restrictions on releasing even local funds to reimburse for our services. These constraints would directly affect current services to 60 disabled and medically fragile individuals in group homes.

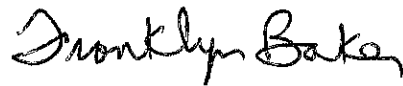
An extended shutdown would paradoxically intensify demand for emergency non-profit services at the very moment we are least able to respond. That does not even account for the likely layoffs of at least dozens of our own personnel – or the multiplier effect on the economy, as Moody's estimates that every one dollar spent on food stamps or unemployment benefits drives about \$1.70 in economic growth. As if the immediate costs were not severe enough, the uncertainties of the situation also feed a "gloom mentality" that also discourages private philanthropy that can help bridge the gap.

While our country's fiscal course is a crucial issue that understandably inflames passions on both sides of the aisle, I urge you to endorse bipartisan efforts to open the government and let our economic recovery – and our own work – resume unimpeded by such uncertainty.

Like many non-profits, we are resilient and resourceful; over the years, we have learned to adjust to economic volatility. In fact, our services are needed most when the economy is at its worst. However, the consequences of the government shutdown are sudden, deep and self-imposed. We urge you to expeditiously re-open the government and resolve the debt ceiling logjam, so we can get back to work on behalf of the residents we all serve in Maryland, Virginia and D.C.

Thank you in advance for your consideration – and please consider this an open invitation to visit any of our two dozen facilities throughout the Chesapeake region.

Sincerely,

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

Franklyn Baker
Chief Operating Officer

Cc: Russell Snyder, President/CEO