

October 23, 2013

Governor Bob McDonnell
Office of the Governor
Patrick Henry Building, 3rd Floor
1111 East Broad Street
Richmond, Virginia 23219

Dear Gov. McDonnell:

On behalf of Volunteers of America Chesapeake and the tens of thousands of Virginians in desperate need of affordable housing, I am writing to urge inclusion of full funding for the Housing Trust Fund (HTF) in the Commonwealth's next budget. As the debate now proceeds, we want to make sure you know how much the Trust Fund matters to efforts to meet this need across the state of Virginia.

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. 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. We particularly seek to assist military veterans grappling with homelessness, substance abuse or mental health challenges. In Northern Virginia, we keep more than 80 veterans and their family members from being homeless by providing supportive housing services. Each year, we shelter 1800 homeless men and women while making permanent supportive housing opportunities available to existing clients. Our track record for productivity and efficiency has made many of our programs national models.

I am writing today to stress the importance of state investment to efforts locally to assist the homeless and near-homeless. No program 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 FY 2014-16 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 black ink, appearing to read "Russell K. Snyder". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Russell K. Snyder
President and CEO

Cc: Franklyn Baker, Chief Operating Officer