

October 23, 2013

Rep. Chris Van Hollen Jr.
Maryland 8th District
1707 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Rep. Van Hollen Jr.:

On behalf of Volunteers of America Chesapeake, I want to alert you to the urgent consequences of the upcoming Conference Committee deliberations on the Fiscal Year 2014 budget on the thousands of homeless individuals we serve across our region. It is critical to our work to sustain FY14 funding for McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Grants at the \$2.381 billion level proposed by the President.

We first wish to thank you and your colleagues for resolving the immediate logjam related to the government shutdown and debt ceiling. Like many non-profits, that crisis severely disrupted our work and cost us significant unanticipated expense – and we appreciate your helping us move ahead. As the debate now proceeds, we want to make sure you know how much the McKinney-Vento funding matters to our work locally for the increasing volume of homeless and near-homeless residents in our area.

Volunteers of America 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. Our track record of productivity and efficiency has made many of our programs national models.

I am writing today to stress the importance of federal investment to our success locally. Regrettably, the loss of the Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program (HPRP) and the sequestration-related cutbacks in Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG) has seriously disrupted our work across the Chesapeake region. The Budget Control Act of 2011 and the sequestration process have placed an enormous burden on federal housing and homeless assistance programs. The post-sequestration \$1.929 billion provided by the

Congress for FY2013 makes it difficult to make even a serious effort to address the soaring need.

Since their inception, these programs have earned strong bipartisan support, both in the community and in the Congress. That is because these programs have consistently delivered a return on investment, in both human and financial terms, in reducing chronic homelessness. As congressional work gets underway next week on the FY14 budget and beyond, we urge your support for McKinney-Vento funding. The outcome directly affects our capacity to help house the homeless across Maryland, Virginia and the District. Please let us know if we can provide additional background and thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Russell Snyder", with a long, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Russell K. Snyder
President & CEO
Volunteers of America Chesapeake

Cc: Franklyn Baker, Chief Operating Officer