

November 21, 2013

Senator Tim Kaine
388 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Kaine:

On behalf of Volunteers of America Chesapeake, one of the largest health and human service providers in Virginia, I am writing to seek your help during the current budget conference committee deliberations in restoring adequate funding for federal Housing Choice Vouchers. We are appreciative of your support in the past and gratified that you can participate so directly in the current discussions as a committee member.

With 32 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.

As I am sure you know, the sequester cutbacks have acutely impacted the thousands of Virginians dependent on Housing Choice Vouchers. Nationally, state and local housing authorities received six percent less funding than before sequestration, the deepest shortfall in the program's 40-year history. Across the Commonwealth, most voucher beneficiaries wait months or even years for this rental assistance, as three-fourths of those eligible have never gotten to the front of the line; and now, Virginia housing authorities are exhausting any reserves or using one-time HUD voucher renewal payments just to keep the wolf from the door. Time is quickly running out! If the sequester mechanism is not adjusted, vouchers for Virginians will be cut by the hundreds. Typically, these reductions then create a ripple of compounding hardship throughout the community. The resulting financial expense ultimately falls on local taxpayers and, of course, the human cost on the homeless facing a frigid winter is heartbreaking.

These programs have long enjoyed bipartisan and bicameral support in the Senate and House of Representatives because they have proven to be effective and cost-efficient. National housing advocates estimate that HUD will need \$17.7 billion for Housing Choice Voucher renewals in 2014 to fully address the impact of the sequestration cuts. We fully understand the many demands you face as you and your colleagues review the budget

options, but wanted to make sure you were aware of the direct impact of this particular program on the most vulnerable Virginians.

Once again, thank you for all you do on our behalf. Please let us know if we can provide any further background.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Russell K. Snyder". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized initial "R" and "S".

Russell K. Snyder
President/CEO

Cc: Franklyn Baker, Chief of Staff and External Affairs Officer