



ERIC GARCETTI
MAYOR

July 29, 2015

The Honorable Johnny Isakson
Chairman
Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard Blumenthal
Ranking Member
Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee
Washington, DC 20510

RE: Ending Veteran Homelessness in Los Angeles

Dear Chairman Isakson and Ranking Member Blumenthal,

Thank you for holding a hearing on ending veteran homelessness. I am committed to ending veteran homelessness in Los Angeles, a city that will house more than 10,000 veterans in 2014 and 2015.

I have joined with mayors of several other cities to take on the challenge to end veteran homelessness in 2015, including Salt Lake City, which between January 2014 and May 2015 housed an estimated 210 veterans, Houston, 1,573, Phoenix, 377, and New Orleans which reached its goal after housing 337 veterans.

Despite the strong effort, the City of Los Angeles estimates that it may fall short of resources to reach its goal by the end of 2015.

Thanks to the Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH) program and the Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) program, the City of Los Angeles has made tremendous progress toward ending veteran homelessness. Since January 1, 2014, the City has housed more than 3,960 veterans. This is substantial progress, however the City estimates that before the end of the year, an additional 3,070 veterans in Los Angeles will require housing support.

For the 3,070 total homeless veterans, the City of Los Angeles, estimates only 2,348 can be served with current resources between now and December 31, 2015. That leaves 722 veterans for whom the City does not have sufficient resources. The \$5.1

million in additional funding would cover the 722 remaining homeless veterans. Because the City has sufficient VASH vouchers to cover the estimated number of chronically homeless veterans in the City of Los Angeles, these remaining veterans comprise non-chronically homeless individuals for whom our rapid rehousing response is critical. Breaking the cycle of homelessness and health deterioration is crucial in preventing these 722 veterans from becoming chronically homeless.

To ensure that housing and services be made available to all homeless veterans by the end of the year, Congress will need to increase the SSVF program's authorization to \$500 million for FY 2016 and agree to appropriate those funds before years end.

At an average cost of \$6,644.80 per homeless veteran, the city calculates an additional \$5,119,785.60 in SSVF funds are necessary to end veteran homelessness in the City of Los Angeles. This \$5.1 million would comprise 62% of a \$8,273,847 allotment to Los Angeles County, which is the jurisdiction responsible for accepting all SSVF funding.

However, it is not enough to wait until our veterans become homeless. We must develop homeless prevention strategies to reduce the inflow into homelessness. The City of Los Angeles estimates that each day 4 to 5 veterans will become homeless. First, this inflow shows us that our work will not be done when we have housed the remaining 3,070 veterans. We must have sufficient transition services and support in place before our service men and women leave the military.

Last fall, the City of Los Angeles partnered with University of Southern California's Center for Innovation and Research on Veterans & Military Families, the L.A. Veterans Collaborative, and Los Angeles County, to launch the L.A. County Veterans Resource Portal giving veterans access to a web-based platform where they locate housing, employment, mental health and health care services for them and their families. Recently, this tool was expanded into a 24-7 text messaging platform to connect veteran peer support specialist with help-seeking veterans.

We also launched "Homes for Heroes", an initiative to encourage landlords with market rate units to house homeless veterans, with a goal of finding 1,000 units by this year.

The city also recently celebrated its 1-year anniversary of the "10,000 Strong" Veterans Hiring Initiative aiming to hire 10,000 veterans in three years (2014-2017). I am pleased to report that, thanks to partners such as the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (V.A.), nearly 5,000 veterans were hired in Los Angeles' public and private sectors. With projects like these, the City of Los Angeles will be better fit to welcome home veterans and help them build successful lives for themselves and their families. Further, these increased services and support will decrease any risk of recidivism in the veteran community.

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Thanks to our close working relationship with the V.A. and Members of Congress, in June 2015, after a \$20 million dollar renovation, we marked the opening of a 55-unit housing complex for homeless veterans at the V.A. West Los Angeles Medical Center campus, which includes space for training and supportive services aimed at helping homeless veterans gain independent living skills.

Thank you to the Members of the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee for ensuring that our nation's veterans are treated like the heroes they are. I look forward to working with the Committee to ensure we have the resources to end veteran homelessness in Los Angeles and across this nation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "E. Garcetti", with a horizontal line extending to the right.

ERIC GARCETTI

Mayor