

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

January 24, 2023

Secretary Marcia L. Fudge
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
451 7th Street SW; Washington, DC 20410

Director Shalanda Young
Office of Management and Budget
725 17th Street NW STE 50001; Washington DC 20503

Dear Secretary Fudge and Director Young,

We appreciate the work the Biden Administration has accomplished to support veterans and reduce homelessness. We as a nation owe our veterans the support and care they deserve after returning home from active or reserve duty.

As the administration implements critical parts of the Housing Opportunity Through Modernization Act (HOTMA), we write to you today in strong support of HUD's proposed changes, issued in its [proposed regulations to implement sec. 102-Sec. 104 of HOTMA](#) on September 17, 2019. These proposed regulations exclude deferred disability and aid and attendance benefits as income, while *also* requesting feedback on the exclusion of veteran's disability benefits from income more generally.

President Obama signed HOTMA into law on July 29, 2016, making necessary reforms to subsidized housing programs to better address homelessness and other affordable housing and community development needs. With this intent in mind, we urge you to broadly exclude veteran disability benefits as income and increase affordable housing assistance for thousands of our nation's veterans. These changes, if finalized, would assist many veterans experiencing homelessness in becoming eligible for HUD-assisted housing.

We also seek additional clarity on HUD's rulemaking process and timeline related to this proposed rule. In 2019, HUD issued a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking. The Office of Management and Budget's Office of Regulatory Affairs makes clear that HUD had finalized these regulations and have been awaiting publication since July 2022. While we understand that the implementation of this rule requires considerable HUD resources, we recognize the urgent need for relief among veterans, particularly veterans with disabilities, who continue to lack access to safe affordable housing in our communities.

According to a Pew Research study, most veterans say while the military prepared them for active duty, only half of respondents report feeling well prepared by the Armed Forces for their

transition to civilian life¹. Additionally, veterans are overrepresented among people experiencing homelessness. HUD's 2020 Point Time Count found that there are well over 11,000 veterans experiencing homelessness in the state of California, and nationally, the number of unsheltered veterans increased by 6% from 2019 to 2020².

An individual's physical environment is a primary determinant of their health. Safe and affordable housing can considerably reduce poor health outcomes.³ Additionally, female veterans are particularly at a disadvantage and their representation among people experiencing homelessness continues to increase. According to the Congressional Research Service, female veterans face extensive challenges that further contribute to their risks of homelessness.⁴ For example, women veterans are more likely to have experienced sexual trauma than women in the general population and are more likely than male veterans to be single parents. In 2020, the VA noted that men experiencing homelessness are frequently living on their own, without family or dependents, and are more likely to use federal programs for emergency shelter and shorter-term housing. The VA noted further that women experiencing homelessness are more often accompanied by children, which may prevent them from accessing these services that are traditionally targeted to individual adults.⁵

To this day, female-identifying veterans face significant challenges when seeking safe housing. Much of the existing emergency housing shelters require women to live in open spaces or prohibits children from residing there. This is particularly difficult for veterans who previously experienced sexual trauma and/or have children. The Government Accountability Office found in 2011 that women veterans faced difficulties finding safe housing as they awaited more permanent options. Specifically, nine of the 142 VA transitional housing programs the GAO surveyed for the report indicated that there had been reported incidents of sexual harassment or assault on women residents.

The Housing Choice Voucher program provides flexibility for veterans, especially women veterans, in determining an appropriate, safe place to live. For many veterans, the proposed changes of this rule means increased housing affordability and stability. We applaud the work that the Administration has done thus far in reducing homelessness, and we urge you to improve on this work by finalizing and publishing changes to exclude veterans' disability benefits as income, thereby making affordable housing options more accessible.

We thank you for your consideration and look forward to hearing about additional progress to reduce homelessness among our nation's veterans. If we can be of further assistance, please have your staff contact Sarah Skirmont in the Office of Representative Linda T. Sánchez at sarah.skirmont@mail.house.gov.

¹ [How veterans readjust to civilian life | Pew Research Center](#)

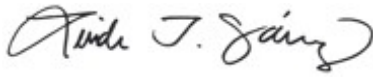
² [Key Findings of 2020 Point-in-Time Count | United States Interagency Council on Homelessness \(USICH\)](#)

³ [Determinants of health \(who.int\)](#)

⁴ <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/RL/RL34024>

⁵ [GAO-22-105360, HOMELESSNESS: VA Provides Support to the Most Vulnerable Women Veterans and Has Taken Steps to Improve Services](#)

Sincerely,



Linda T. Sánchez
Member of Congress



Dwight Evans
Member of Congress



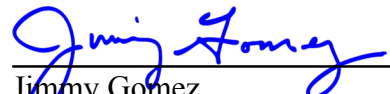
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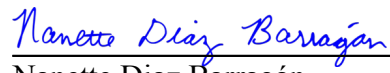
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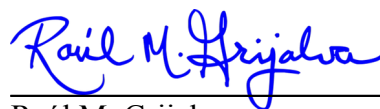
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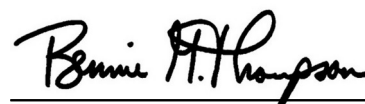
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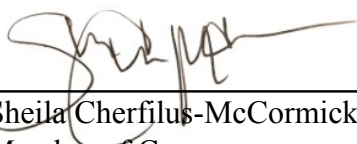
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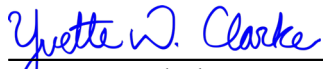
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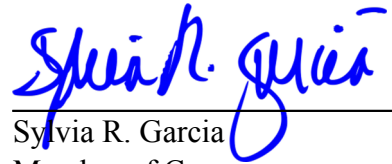
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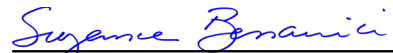
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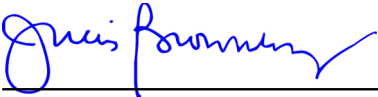
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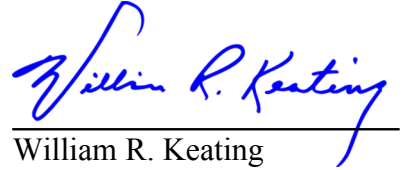
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