

**Written Statement of Mark Johnston**

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**Hearing entitled**

**“Meeting the Housing Needs of Veterans”**

**Before the**

**Subcommittee on Housing and Transportation  
Committee on Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs  
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Chairman Allard, Ranking Member Reed, Members of the Subcommittee, I am pleased to be here today on behalf of Secretary Alphonso Jackson and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. The Secretary recognizes the responsibility America has to its veterans especially those who are homeless.

It is estimated that veterans account for approximately one quarter of the homeless population. For the past 20 years HUD has served homeless veterans as well as the other homeless subpopulations in the United States. To better serve this population, in 1994 HUD developed the Continuum of Care planning and grant process, which calls for communities to develop local plans to solve homelessness. Continuum of Care is a community-led effort that involves a diverse group of organizations, including state and local governments, public housing agencies, non-profit providers, foundations, and homeless and formerly homeless persons. The Continuum identifies the community's housing and service needs, as well as the existing inventory to address those needs. The Continuum then assesses remaining needs and determines how to best address them by proposing a comprehensive plan and specific project requests for HUD funding. Since 1994, the Continuums have proven to be an effective coordinating body for fighting homelessness; among the reasons for their effectiveness are the broad-based partnerships they have forged at the local level. HUD is committed through this Continuum of Care to ending Chronic Homelessness.

To underscore HUD's continued commitment to serve homeless veterans, this year's Continuum of Care application materials encourage organizations that represent homeless veterans to be at the planning table and require that communities identify the number of homeless persons who are veterans so that each community can more effectively address their needs. In collaboration

with the Department of Veterans Affairs, HUD also strongly encourages grant applicants to use VA's CHALENG data in assessing the needs of homeless veterans within their community.

In 2005, HUD awarded nearly \$1.3 billion in targeted homeless assistance. Homeless veterans are eligible for all of the Department's homeless assistance programs, and HUD awarded funding to 90 percent of all of veteran-specific applications received. HUD has also established a Veteran Resource Center (HUDVET) in consultation with national veteran service organizations.

HUDVET's goal is to provide veterans and their family members with information on HUD's community-based programs and services. It is the Department's hope that, equipped with this knowledge, armed forces personnel and veterans can become more involved in the community-based planning and decision-making process as well as utilization of services and local resources.

HUD is involved with a number of interagency initiatives that focus on solving homelessness in this country. One of these initiatives is the VA's Secretarial Advisory Committee on Homeless Veterans, an important advisory group that has addressed chronic homelessness among veterans. HUD is also involved with the Collaborative Initiative to Help End Chronic Homelessness, a joint initiative with HUD, VA and HHS. HUD provided the housing needed for homeless persons, while the VA and HHS provided the needed supportive services to help them stabilize their lives.

Another promising joint initiative between HUD and the Department of Labor that serves homeless veterans is a demonstration to provide housing and needed employment assistance. Local partners in this demonstration provide additional needed services such as health care, education, and life skills.

In consultation with the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness, chaired by Secretary Alphonso Jackson, HUD developed a special initiative to help persons who have been homeless for years and are also chronically inebriated. HUD provided funding for permanent housing, and community partners provided needed supportive services. Twelve programs in eleven cities received funding. Homeless veterans are among those served by these homeless initiatives.

In addition to these initiatives, HUD participates in national homeless conferences. For instance, as the Director of HUD's homeless programs, I was in Denver this week speaking at the Department of Labor's Veterans National Grantee Conference, along with my colleagues from the VA and Department of Labor. These conferences provide an opportunity to collaborate with other organizations that share the goal of solving homelessness.

HUD has developed two technical assistance guidebooks to benefit homeless veterans.

*Coordinating Resources and Developing Strategies to Address the Needs of Homeless Veterans* describes programs serving veterans that are effectively coordinating HUD homeless funding with other resources. The second guidebook, *A Place at the Table: Homeless Veterans and Local Homeless Assistance Planning Networks*, describes the successful participation of ten veterans organizations in their local Continuums of Care. Both of these guidebooks are available on HUD's website.

The Administration is committed through the Continuum of Care process to ending chronic homelessness, as well as solving homelessness among veterans and all Americans. HUD will continue to work with federal, state and local partners to this commitment.

Mr. Chairman, I will be glad to address any questions the Subcommittee may have.