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Policy Statement: National Center for Homelessness Among Veterans

WASHINGTON, Jan. 1 2014— The National Center for Homelessness Among Veterans (NCHAV) is a research organization dedicated to promoting data-driven, evidence-based solutions to end veteran homelessness. As part of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), the NCHAV develops and promotes policies, programs, and best practices with the objective of strengthening the VA's mission of ending veteran homelessness by 2015.

That mission was set with the Administration's introduction of the Five-Year Plan to End Veteran Homelessness. Working together the Congress and the Administration have bolstered existing programs, and innovated with new programs, and have made tremendous progress towards that goal; veteran homelessness has seen a 24% decline in the past four years, and a 70% decline since 2005. Part of the successful innovation that has taken place in recent years has been the creation of the National Center for Homelessness Among Veterans.

Why is the National Center critical?

Working with their academic partners at the University of Pennsylvania, the NCHAV has been conducting research and using the resulting data to drive VA policy changes since its inception in 2009. The successes of programs like the Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF), and the introduction of Housing First to VA homelessness programs, can be in large part attributed to the National Center.

The National Center ensures that our policies are effective at ending veteran homelessness, as well as cost-effective; their work helps to ensure that every dollar spent is used to the fullest, to save veterans from living on the streets.

The National Center is also responsible for developing a national homeless and at-risk veteran registry, monitoring the services provided to these veterans, and the effectiveness of those services. This information is critical to the success of the Five-Year Plan to End Veteran Homelessness, and will be just as vital in the prevention phase after 2015.

Historically, the epidemic of veteran homelessness occurred in part due to neglect and bad information. By supporting the National Center in the years to come, we can make sure that there will be a dedicated research team to monitor the homeless veteran population, and the effectiveness of our efforts to house that population. We have little to no idea of the scale in which veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan will become at-risk, or fall into homelessness. The long term propagation of the National Center will ensure that we are prepared to support the veterans of tomorrow, and not repeat the mistakes of the past several decades.

Mission: The National Coalition for Homeless Veterans will end homelessness among veterans by shaping public policy, promoting collaboration, and building the capacity of service providers.

What should Congress do?

NCHV recommends that Congress permanently authorize the National Center for Homelessness Among Veterans. Currently, the NCHAV is not specifically authorized and is funded at the discretion of the Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs. Congress should specifically authorize the NCHAV as a permanent institution to deliver high quality research on homeless veteran issues, and to ensure employment of sound prevention and early intervention strategies by the VA and its community partners.

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