



## **HB1504**

3/12/2025

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Senate Agriculture and Veterans Affairs Committee: My name is Jacqueline Hassett and I am the Executive Director at Red River Valley Community Action (RRVCA). We are one of the state's seven Community Action Agencies, serving Grand Forks, Pembina, Nelson and Walsh counties. On behalf of RRVCA, I am writing in strong support of HB1504, which will direct 50% of the gaming tax paid by Veteran Service Organizations to the Post War Trust Fund or the North Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs grant program.

Through our partnership with the Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) program, we provide direct assistance to veterans experiencing or at risk of homelessness, helping them secure stable housing, healthcare navigation, legal assistance and employment resources. Here at RRVCA, we believe the case management we provide through the SSVF program should not be simply transactional, but transformational. Transformation into the well-being and stability of the lives of the veterans who gave so much to this country. We focus on supporting these men and women toward self-sufficiency, not a brief exchange or band-aide approach. Unfortunately, the need for these direct services is rising.

I've seen firsthand the increase in the need for these services. The phone calls, walk ins, and referrals we receive for veterans who are literally homeless have gone up in the last year.

Veterans have a particular need for someone to assist them in locating affordable housing in a market that is often hard to navigate on the fixed income many of them have. Gaps in services

often prevent them from locating resources for mental and physical health needs. These veterans need a case worker who can help organize and provide expertise such as navigating tenant rights and important paperwork. This work helps prevent the back and forth and unnecessary repetition of other services which drive up costs for the larger community.

The overall numbers of veterans we serve have become such that we need to hire another case worker. We want to continue to provide the same quality of services we do now and prevent from having to turn away any veterans who come to us for help. We are proud to be able to help veterans during crisis, while upholding the dignity they deserve. HB1504 will provide much-needed resources to ensure no veteran is left behind due to funding shortages.

I appreciate your consideration and service to our state. Please reach out I can provide additional information.

With Gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'JH' with a large loop and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Jacqueline Hassett, LMSW

Executive Director

Red River Valley Community Action

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