

Community Action Partnership Regions 1 (Williston) and 8 (Dickinson)

RE: HB1504

March 12, 2025

Submitted by Erv Bren, Executive Director

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Agriculture and Veterans Affairs Committee:

My name is Erv Bren, the Executive Director of Community Action Partnership in Williston and Dickinson. I am writing in 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 Veteran Affairs grant program. This legislation is a critical investment in veteran services, ensuring that those who have served our country have the support needed to achieve housing stability and self-sufficiency.

Community Action Partnership Regions 1 and 8 is one of seven Community Action Agencies in North Dakota operating programs that help individuals and families overcome poverty and build stable futures. Our Agency serves the following counties in Western North Dakota: Adams, Billings, Bowman, Divide, Dunn, Golden Valley, Hettinger, McKenzie, Slope, Stark, and Williams, providing services such as housing assistance, case management, employment support, transportation, and financial education to low-income households – including veterans.

Many of the veterans we assist face significant barriers, including lack of affordable housing, employment instability, mental health challenges, and difficulty accessing VA benefits. Through our partnership with the Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) program, which is a federal

program funded by the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs, we help low-income veteran households with the above-stated challenges to become self-sufficient through case management and limited financial assistance.

The number of veterans in our service area receiving assistance has increased over the past couple of years, putting strain on our current funding for meeting their needs. HB1504 will expand the ability to provide targeted financial assistance, working to ensure that every veteran experiencing homelessness in North Dakota has access to stable housing, case management, and supportive services. With the increased demand and few resources, like the absence of homeless shelters in our service area, this funding is more critical than ever.

Supporting HB1504 is an investment in real, long-term solutions for North Dakota's veterans. This funding will directly expand access to stable housing, supportive services, and financial assistance, ensuring that homelessness among veterans is rare, brief, and non-recurring. By passing HB1504, this committee has the opportunity to make a tangible difference in the lives of those who have served our country. Our appreciation to the men and women who have fearlessly served our country will never be enough. It is our duty as American citizens to ensure they receive the gratitude and support they so rightly deserve.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Erv Bren", with a stylized, cursive script.

Erv Bren
Executive Director