

Re: HB1504

March 11, 2025

Submitted by: Lora Papachek, Executive Director

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

On behalf of Dakota Prairie Community Action Agency (DPCAA), 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 Veterans Affairs grant program. Ensuring that the veterans who have served our country have the necessary support to achieve self-sufficiency and housing stability is of utmost importance. This bill would be instrumental in providing those needed services for our local veterans.

DPCAA is one of seven Community Action Agencies in the state of North Dakota that operate programs to help individuals and families to overcome poverty. DPCAA serves the counties of Ramsey, Benson, Eddy, Cavalier, Towner and Rolette providing a wide range of services such as housing assistance, money management, transportation, utility assistance, case management and employment support to low-income households, which includes low-income veteran households.

The Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) program has allowed us to provide direct assistance to veterans that were homeless or at risk of homelessness. The services included, but were not limited to, helping them to secure stable housing, referrals to the state healthcare navigator and getting them set up with resources to secure employment. In the past year DPCAA served ten (10) local veterans through the SSVF program but the need in our Region is growing and I feel like those numbers will rise in 2025. Many of the veterans face barriers such as employment instability, mental health challenges, lack of affordable housing and difficulty accessing VA benefits they would qualify for. Through Community Action's case management services, we can help them navigate these obstacles that they may struggle with on their own.

Region 3 is a very rural area with many small towns and not enough shelters available for the needs of our homeless community. Veterans can oftentimes find it difficult to get a roof over their head if the shelters are full or need to prioritize families with children over single adults. In the North Dakota winter this can be a very dangerous situation they find themselves in. Helping them to be self-sufficient and find stable housing is imperative.

HB1504 would be a long-term solution to help us meet our ever-present funding needs. Funding continues to be a challenge in meeting the needs of our veterans and we strive to ensure that no veterans are left behind.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please do not hesitate to reach out for any additional information needed.

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