



Community Action Program Region VII, Inc.

March 12, 2025

Submitted by Karen Busse, SSVF Case Manager

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

On behalf of Community Action, Region 7, 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. 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, Region 7 is one of seven Community Action Agencies (CAAs) in North Dakota, operating programs that help individuals and families overcome poverty and build stable futures. Our agency serves the counties of Burleigh, Emmons, Grant, Kidder, McLean, Mercer, Morton, Oliver, Sheridan and Sioux, providing services such as housing assistance, case management, employment support, transportation, and financial education to low-income households—including Veterans.

Through our partnership with the Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) program, we provide direct assistance to Veterans who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness, helping them secure stable housing, healthcare navigation, and employment resources. Last year alone, we served 51 through SSVF and witnessed firsthand the growing demand for Veteran homelessness services. Many of the Veterans we assist face significant barriers, including lack of affordable housing, employment instability, mental health challenges, and difficulty accessing VA benefits.

As a case manager for the SSVF program at Community Action, Region 7, I have had daily exposure to the number of Veterans seeking assistance because they are either homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. Last year our program served 51 Veterans with obtaining stable housing. Some of the Veterans who are homeless come to SSVF with no resources and no support system to help them stabilize. Through SSVF services, Veterans are able to obtain or maintain stable housing which then allows them to work on other needs such as obtaining employment or accessing healthcare. It is a pleasure to watch Veterans succeed and turn their lives around. One example of this is a Veteran who was in danger of becoming homeless. He had drifted since his discharge from the service and had been unable to hold a steady job. The Veteran turned to SSVF and was assisted with starting a budget, support to maintain his apartment, and made a decision to enroll in college with his VA benefits. While in college, Veteran had months where he couldn't pay his rent, didn't have money for food, and needed transportation to get to and from classes. Veteran was assisted with all these areas and succeeded in graduating from college this spring. He also obtained employment with a local hospital and has now graduated from the SSVF program as well.



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This is just one example of the difference that the SSVF program can make in the lives of the Veterans who turn to SSVF for support and assistance. Veterans often say it is extremely difficult for them to ask for help because their service in the military taught them to be independent. However, once they overcome that barrier, SSVF can assist Veterans to make life-changing decisions.

Despite our best efforts, funding remains a major challenge in meeting the rising need for veteran services. HB1504 will provide much-needed resources to ensure no veteran is left behind due to funding shortages. Enhance case management services to connect veterans with stable employment and healthcare.

HB1504 is an investment in long-term solutions, not just temporary relief. By aligning financial resources with the needs of North Dakota's veterans, we can ensure that homelessness among those who served is rare, brief, and non-recurring.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please do not hesitate to reach out if we can provide additional information. Karen Busse, SSVF Case Manager, Community Action Region 7, 258-2240 or karenb@cap7.com.

*Respectfully,
Karen Busse*