



VETS HELPING VETS SINCE 1974



May 6, 2021

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor, State of California
State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Phil Ting
Chair, Assembly Budget Committee
State Capitol, Room 6026
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Nancy Skinner
Chair, Senate Budget Committee
State Capitol, Room 5094
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Budget Request for a Pilot Program for Permanent Support Housing Services for Veterans

Dear Governor Newsom, Chair Skinner and Chair Ting,

On behalf of Swords to Plowshares and NextGen California, we write to request a budget proposal to provide a one-time, \$26 million General Fund allocation to create a three-year pilot program for enhanced, on-site permanent supportive housing services for senior veterans. This budget augmentation would allocate funding for permanent supportive housing programs in high-need areas of the state to implement the pilot, providing the staffing and resources to meet the needs of formerly homeless veterans. This pilot program would make it possible for these veterans to remain housed and not have to enter skilled nursing care, and, quite frankly, decrease the possibility of their becoming homeless and dying on the streets. Data from the pilot will be used to advocate for the permanent adoption of this model by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

Aging veterans and veterans with disabilities who have experienced chronic homelessness are in between the stages of independent living and skilled nursing care and have no middle ground service delivery model available to them. These veterans require additional on-site services and current models are unable to provide these types of intermediary services. With enhanced on-site staffing and resources, permanent supportive housing providers can become that middle ground.

Many regions of California have done a tremendous job trying to address the issue of homelessness by implementing effective Housing First approaches but there is a critical missing element -- resources for veterans who require additional services within the permanent supportive housing framework. Senior veterans with chronic conditions cannot remain housing secure without help with their daily living activities - managing their medications, navigating the healthcare system, and interacting with appropriate geriatric and mental health service providers. Further, there is a complete misunderstanding of the type of support the federal HUD-VASH can provide in these situations -- the program is very limited in the case management area. HUD-VASH's rental subsidies support property management but do not provide for these middle ground supportive services.

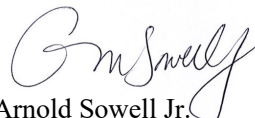
The model program presented by this proposal would be the first of its kind -- there are no programs currently available to formerly homeless senior veterans with high acuity designed for them to age in place. There are many quantifiable benefits to aging in place: both to an individuals' quality of life and an overall cost savings to the system. This proposed model of enhanced permanent supportive services for veterans who have experienced chronic homelessness promises to be cost effective, scalable, and replicable.

Since 1974, Swords to Plowshares has served homeless, low-income and at-risk veterans in the greater Bay Area and knows firsthand the profound impact that these services will provide our state's most at-risk, senior veterans. NextGen California supports programs and policies that address homelessness and is deeply committed to honoring the sacrifice of the men and women who risked their lives to serve, protect, and defend our country.

Sincerely,



Michael Blecker
Executive Director, Swords to Plowshares



Arnold Sowell Jr.
Executive Director, NextGen California

cc: Members of the Senate Budget Committee
 Members of the Assembly Budget Committee
 Jason Elliott, Senior Counselor to the Governor