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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

February 14, 2012

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DEAN, NEW JERSEY DELEGATION

The Honorable Eric Shinseki
Secretary
Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue, NW
Washington DC 20515

Dear Secretary Shinseki,

I am writing to express my strong support for the Supportive Services for Veteran Families Program (SSVF) grant application submitted by Soldier On, who is seeking to provide much needed housing assistance and stability to veterans in need in Central New Jersey. I am hopeful that you will diligently review this application and lend your full support to funding this request.

As you may be aware, Soldier On is a leader for community-based homeless and at-risk veterans' housing and services. Soldier On has 15 years of experience developing transitional and permanent housing and successfully creating innovative homeownership opportunities in underserved areas—addressing both the urban and rural needs of local communities. They have a demonstrated commitment to working with VA Medical Centers (VAMC), state and local governments and veterans service organizations (VSO) and would further develop region-wide collaborations that provide prevention, clinical MH/SA treatment, housing, shelter, and employment. In fact, they are currently operating a very successful SSVF program for the Albany/Stratton VAMC service region that I believe would allow them to readily execute a similar program in my Congressional District.

While there are currently SSVF programs for Camden and five counties in northern New Jersey, the concentration of veterans and their families in Central New Jersey are without access to prevention and rapid re-housing resources. With the VA's support, Soldier On will be able to provide very specialized services to address the needs of a very specific population in Middlesex, Monmouth, Ocean and Burlington Counties thereby enabling a federal-private partnership that will truly help our veterans.

During my chairmanship of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee, I wrote the first comprehensive law (Public Law 107-95) to address chronic homelessness among our nation's veterans. My law—which authorized \$1 billion to aid homeless veterans and prevent veterans from becoming homeless—was developed through numerous meeting and hearings with the VA, the VSOs, and many nonprofit and community-based organizations. I am therefore acutely aware of the challenges that we face to ensure we are providing veterans with the proper tools to

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Ad Hoc Congressional Committee for Irish Affairs • Congressional Caucus on Human Trafficking

transition back to civilian life and remain self-sufficient. Accordingly, I am grateful for the VA's action on and commitment to ending veterans' homelessness by 2015 and believe that nonprofit and community-based organizations, like Soldier On, will continue to play a key role in achieving this goal.

I recently began working closely with Soldier On to develop a program on the former-Fort Monmouth property in Monmouth County. Given the dedication and commitment I have witnessed by their team, I am confident that they will use these resources as effectively and efficiently as possible to benefit veterans throughout the region. Accordingly, I urge you to give this application favorable consideration for funding.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this request. If I can be of further assistance to you on this request, please contact me or my legislative assistant, Cate Benedetti, in my Washington DC office.

Sincerely,



CHRISTOPHER H SMITH

Member of Congress

CC: Mr. Vince Kane
National Director
VA's National Center on Homelessness Among Veterans
4100 Chester Avenue, Suite 201
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