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**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**

October 23, 2018

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The Honorable Sheila Y. Oliver  
Lieutenant Governor, State of New Jersey  
Commissioner, N.J. Department of Community Affairs  
101 South Broad Street  
PO Box 800  
Trenton, New Jersey 08608-2401

Dear Lt. Gov. Oliver,

I write to you today offering the strongest possible support for the Gordon H. Mansfield Veterans Village housing project in the Fourth Congressional District I represent in Tinton Falls, Monmouth County.

As a former two-term chairman of the House Veterans' Committee and author of 14 veterans bills that have been enacted into law—including *The Homeless Veterans Comprehensive Assistance Act* (Public Law 107-95)—I have long been familiar with the national disgrace of veteran homelessness. For years I have heard of the good works of the group planning the project, Soldier On, Inc., a nonprofit organization with a proven record in tackling the complex problem of our veterans of the armed forces who have fallen on hard times and find themselves homeless.

I have met personally with Soldier On and its leaders on numerous occasions for more than six years. They currently serve our most vulnerable veterans here in nine counties, including Monmouth and Ocean as well as several other northern and central New Jersey counties. There are more than 400,000 veterans in the Garden State, and they need to know their elected leaders at the federal, state and local levels will take care of those who have served us in uniform, past, present and future.

Soldier On employs a staff of 27 to serve the needs of at-risk New Jersey veterans and their families since 2012 through the federal Veterans Administration's (VA) Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) outreach program. I have long been a proud supporter of SSVF. In fact, in February 2012 I wrote to Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki in support of Soldier On for a SSVF grant application (I have enclosed a copy of the letter). That grant was awarded to Soldier On, as well as subsequent SSVF grants, and it has been serving veterans in New Jersey ever since.

The causes of homelessness can be quite diverse, and Soldier On offers a variety of assistance measures to address each veteran's own problems, be it with housing, employment, counseling, transportation, financial and legal matters, or any combination of same. Through its homelessness prevention and rapid rehousing programs, Soldier On reports that it has aided over 4,500 veterans and families in New Jersey, including approximately \$6,220,600 in temporary financial assistance. Soldier On plans to apply to the New Jersey Housing and Mortgage Finance Agency (NJHMFA) to secure federal tax credits to finance the construction of seventy units of permanent housing for very-low-income veterans with histories of homelessness and disabilities.

The Tinton Falls project incorporates a comprehensive supportive services plan funded primarily by

Co-Chairman of the following: Task Force on Alzheimer's Disease • Bi-Partisan Taskforce for Combating Anti-Semitism • Lyme Disease Caucus  
Coalition for Autism Research and Education • Bi-Partisan Congressional Pro-Life Caucus • Bosnia Caucus • Poland Caucus • Ad Hoc Congressional Committee for Irish Affairs  
Congressional Caucus on Human Trafficking • Vietnam Caucus • Congressional Heart and Stroke Coalition • Fragile X Caucus • Spina Bifida Caucus • Hungarian Caucus  
Malaria and Neglected Tropical Diseases Caucus • Hong Kong Caucus • Congressional Pediatric and Adult Hydrocephalus Caucus

federal dollars through the VA. In similar projects it has built in other states, Soldier On has demonstrated it can leverage significant financial resources from the federal government (and additional sources other than NJHMFA-like entities) to successfully operate a stand-alone development like the Tinton Falls project.

Soldier On cites its close working relationship with the regional VA medical centers and other local service providers, which will allow it to provide direct services to veterans residing at this housing project, including critical mental health and addiction recovery services, life skills training, financial literacy, healthy living guidance, job support and other challenges.

Soldier On has told me repeatedly it uses a "housing first" approach to put those vets with a history of homelessness on a stable path to recovery: permanent housing is its key component to this project and cannot be achieved without tax credit financing. Federal as well as state funding (such as NJHMFA resources), will be combined with other resources. These include valuable land (provided by the Borough of Tinton Falls at no cost), support from the Soldier On Foundation, funding from the VA and the VA's Supportive Housing program and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban development (HUD-VASH).

Soldier On says research from the VA and HUD show a great need for supportive housing –and the accompanying supportive services (critical in my view)—for veterans in New Jersey.

This project will offer the chance and hope for safe and permanent housing to low-income veterans, an underserved population in Monmouth County and surrounding counties. In fact, this development will have a positive and significant impact on the Borough of Tinton Falls' obligations for its fair share housing development plan at a regional site that Soldier On believes has heretofore received limited supportive housing assistance, particularly from the funding that is the subject of this application.

Soldier On feels the Gordon H. Mansfield Veterans Village meets the critical housing policy goals, and priorities our State has championed for our men and woman who've served in the Armed Forces. I am inclined to agree.

The Soldier On proposal has my enthusiastic support. Please give its application every due and proper consideration that you and your staff are able.

Thank you for your public service to the great State of New Jersey, including formerly in the State legislature.

Sincerely,



CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH  
Member of Congress

cc: Charles A. Richman, NJHMFA