

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 25, 2018

The Honorable Susan Collins, Chairman
The Honorable Jack Reed, Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban Development
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Collins and Ranking Member Reed:

As you work to develop the Transportation, Housing and Urban Development (THUD) appropriations bill for Fiscal Year 2019, we respectfully ask that you include language that would help improve the Tribal HUD-VASH program to enable Native American veterans to use the program vouchers to reside in Indian Housing Block Grant (IHBG) homes.

Congress established the HUD-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) program through the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2008. While the program works to house and provide support services to many American veterans, the program did not work for Native American veterans living on tribal lands.

To address this need, in FY2015, Congress appropriated \$5.9 million to establish the Tribal HUD-VASH demonstration program to bring the mission of HUD-VASH to Indian Country. The Tribal HUD-VASH program seeks, in part, to house Native veterans on their home reservations so that they can live near their families – with access to culturally appropriate and traditional healing practices.

While the Tribal HUD-VASH demonstration has worked to house 103 Native veterans, with another 98 enrolled and in the process, the program's full potential has been limited by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) implementation of the Tribal HUD-VASH program. HUD has declared that the Tribal HUD-VASH vouchers cannot be used to help house a Native veteran in a unit that qualifies as Formula Current Assisted Stock (F-CAS) under the IHBG program.

HUD's F-CAS limitation is not supported in law and runs contrary to the goals of both NAHASDA and the Tribal HUD-VASH program. HUD's regulatory limit unnecessarily places an additional burden on a tribe's housing budget and additional limits on a tribe's ability to build sorely needed new housing. Indian Country nationally faces an epidemic housing shortage. Limiting the housing stock that can be used in the Tribal HUD-VASH program forces participating tribes to make the choice of either housing tribal veterans far off-reservation in "eligible" homes or foregoing the benefits of the program altogether.

To address this concern and improve the Tribal HUD-VASH program, we respectfully request that you include the following language in the FY19 THUD bill within the “Public and Indian Housing—Tenant-Based Rental Assistance” provision that appropriates funding for the Tribal HUD-VASH program:

“Provided further, That grant recipients may use funds to house veterans in dwelling units that are owned or operated by a recipient of Native American Housing Block Grant funds or that are assisted or supported by Indian Housing Block Grant funds, as authorized under Title I of the Native American Housing and Self-Determination Act.”

This no cost regulatory fix will provide needed flexibility to enable tribal governments to better help Native American veterans find a home in Indian Country. Thank you for your leadership on this critical issue and your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

MARTIN HEINRICH
United States Senator

TOM UDALL
United States Senator

ELIZABETH WARREN
United States Senator

HEIDI HEITKAMP
United States Senator

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