

**Testimony**  
**Homeless Veterans Issues**  
**Joint Public Hearing to the**  
**Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness**  
**&**  
**Urban Affairs and Housing**  
**November 10, 2015**

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**Executive Director**  
**Veterans Multi-Service Center, Inc.**

Thank you for the opportunity to address the committee today.

My name is Mo Gillen. I am a 27-year Army Veteran, and I currently serve as the Deputy Executive Director of the Veterans Multi-Service Center, “VMC,” a regional veteran-focused community-based non-profit organization headquartered here in Philadelphia.

VMC is a provider of Supportive Services for Veteran Families – “SSVF” – under two grant agreements with the VA. Under the first, we serve Veterans in the five-county Philadelphia area, and throughout southern New Jersey and Delaware, and under the second, we serve Veterans in a 13-county area in the central part of Pennsylvania.

VMC is also a subcontractor under two other SSVF programs managed by partner agencies in the city of Philadelphia, and our work has been critical to the placement into permanent housing of more than 1300 Veterans in the last two years. In Philadelphia, there are just a few dozen Veterans who remain literally homeless. In each case, the Veteran is known to us by name, and we have deliberately connected them to the placement system via a particular agency – either VMC or one of our partners.

VMC manages a number of additional programs that provide permanent supportive housing to Veterans who need longer term support to end homelessness and prevent future occurrences, and we operate two transitional housing programs on the campus of the Coatesville VA Medical Center in Chester County.

We also operate a day drop-in program in the city, providing breakfast, lunch and services six days a week to Veterans experiencing homelessness and to those who have been recently housed but continue to struggle in gaining stability of their housing. This program, known as the “Perimeter,” serves as the single Coordinated Entry Point for Homeless and At Risk Veterans throughout the City of Philadelphia. Veterans are quickly assessed and aligned to the most appropriate partner agency for rapid rehousing and other assistance.

Housing all Veterans who have been experiencing homelessness is an ambitious goal, but it’s one that’s within sight of attainment in Philadelphia and the surrounding communities. With that attainment, we need to ensure that we continue the momentum created by all of the collaboration and cooperation between governmental agencies and non-profits in reaching this goal, and must transition the conversation from the attainment of this very significant achievement into sustaining it.

VMC's "Perimeter" program, for example, currently serves more than 130 meals per day, many of them to Veterans who are at high risk of returning to homelessness, but because they are not in crisis, there is, unfortunately, no dedicated funding to provide this kind of stability service. It's a challenge we need to address soon in order to ensure that homelessness among Veterans is not just rare, and brief, but also non-recurring.

Across all of these efforts, we work as partners with other non-profits in the area, with our federal, state and local agencies, especially with the various departments of the City of Philadelphia and the departments of the many counties across Pennsylvania where we serve. Of particular note is the team in Montgomery County, where our team includes a constituent services representative from State Senator Mensch's office (Shaina Ward).

We have been very pleased to have played a small part in the development and the announcement of the Governor's Challenge to End Homelessness Among Veterans in Pennsylvania, with a goal of placing in permanent housing – between September 23 and December 31 – more than 500 Veterans who are currently experiencing homelessness. We know that this goal is achievable, and we have been doing our part for the last 45 days.