

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

December 10, 2017

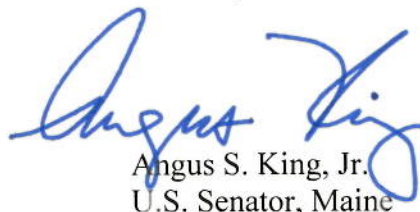
The Honorable David J. Shulkin, M.D.
Secretary
Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue, Northwest
Washington, D.C. 20420

Dear Mr. Secretary,

I write to express my serious concern over reports that the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) considered a reduction in funding for the Housing and Urban Development Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing) HUD-VASH program during Fiscal Year 2018. A September 2017 VA Memorandum stated that Specific Purpose funding lines, including those allocating funds to the VA-HUD program, would be realigned to General Purpose and allocated to VHA Networks to be used at the discretion of the Network Directors. The HUD-VASH program provides critical housing support to homeless veterans and has played a critical role in reducing veteran homelessness across the nation, and I strongly oppose these types of funding reductions. While I was glad to see the VA announce on December 7, 2017, that there “will be absolutely no change in the funding to support our homeless programs,” I found the original proposal highly concerning and urge the VA to continue supporting this successful program.

When considering future spending proposals, I strongly support the inclusion of robust funding for HUD-VASH. Consistent funding is important for the continued success of the program, as the long term approach to homelessness, which utilizes VA case managers in addition to vouchers, requires continuity of skilled staff. Thanks in large part to the HUD-VASH program, the number of homeless veterans dropped by 47 percent between 2010 and 2016. Alarming, the number of homeless veterans in the United States rose this year for the first time since 2010 – emphasizing the continued need for targeted housing and service resources that serve this population. I plan to work with my colleagues in support of this important program that serves the needs of homeless veterans in Maine and across the country, and I hope that the Department of Veterans Affairs will continue as an enthusiastic partner in these efforts to end veteran homelessness.

Sincerely,



Angus S. King, Jr.
U.S. Senator, Maine