

Mr. Chair and Members. My name is Dr. Kristy Janigo, and I served in the North Dakota Army National Guard from 2000-2006. I was a sergeant and a squad leader with the one hundred thirty second Quartermaster Company. I am the American Legion Department of Minnesota Legislative Chair.

One of the most serious issues facing the military and veteran community is homelessness. We need to fund efforts to end veteran homelessness in Minnesota, and this will require significant investment and effort. We also need to look at our current policies and eliminate ways we are inadvertently perpetuating homelessness.

We veterans do not like to ask for help. We will do almost whatever it takes to be self-reliant. Strong. So, a veteran asking for help by entering a shelter or seeking housing supports ... that represents an about face for that person. A first step to turning their life around.

There are 331 veterans on the homeless veterans registry experiencing homelessness in Minnesota. For too many veterans, the price of moving to permanent housing is giving up all but \$121 a month, OR they can choose to remain homeless. The state terms these federal benefits "unearned income." This is NOT unearned income. This income in the form of VA benefits and pensions is very much earned. Ask just about any veteran in the U.S. and they will tell you that compensation for injuries on behalf of their country is NOT "unearned" to them. I ask, are any of you here willing to sacrifice your hearing, or one of your arms, or perhaps deal with lifelong skin conditions, or God forbid, cancer, from toxic exposure while serving in the Middle East? And if so, what price would you put on that?

Last year, the bill addressing this issue was HF3568/SF3417, led by Catholic Charities. It had bipartisan support, and so HF 732 must pass this year. Please let these veterans keep their federal income. This measure would provide one more tool in the toolbox to end veteran homelessness. Thank you for your time.