

***Prepared Statement of Babette Peyton, Veteran, United States Army, Resident, Catholic Charities St. Leo Residence, Chicago Illinois***

Chairwoman Biggert, Ranking Member Gutierrez, and Members of the Committee. I am Babette Peyton and I am a Veteran of the United States Army, where I served from January 1973 until January of 1976.

I was number one in my battalion and received my first stripe during basic training. God has been in my life since the beginning. My job during my term of service was a Poly-Traumatic Medivac Specialist. I assisted wounded soldiers and stabilized them for return to the United States. To say the least, I was surrounded by death on a regular basis.

As a returned-home wounded veteran, my health issues began spiraling down within the past three years. A long term service injury left me paralyzed on one side. This experience took me on a journey of being in and out of the hospital, to a nursing home, and almost to hospice. At the beginning of my journey, I was told that I would never be able to recover from my paralysis. This was a lot for an active and independent person with her own apartment on the third floor of a tall, four-story building without an elevator. Since I was paralyzed and could not walk, it was impossible to return to my apartment. Therefore, I found myself a resident of a nursing home. Just four months before my paralysis I was visiting other people in nursing homes – I did not want to live in a nursing home.

While at the hospital for care, I spoke with two other veterans about the St. Leo Residence. I was told that St. Leo's had a 400 person-long wait list. I did not care. I received assistance in filling out the application and faxing it over to Catholic Charities. Three months later I was called for my first interview at St. Leo's.

My struggles continued because I found out that I needed to have a security deposit and an income. This did not deter me either. So with a prayer and support I met with a person from one of the veteran organizations that I am a member of, and received assistance with the security deposit. With the continued support of various veteran organizations I was able to receive my first month's rent, and was connected with a government subsidy that would allow me to be able to afford the monthly rent. The blessings continued, because my SSI also began, and I had a stable income.

My move in date at the St. Leo Residence was May 2010. Since I have been at St. Leo's, I am not only surrounded by my fellow veterans, I have been connected with caring and professional staff, a beautiful apartment and a beautiful campus. Catholic Charities, my fellow veterans and Veteran Service Organizations have allowed me to regain my independence. I did not have to live in a nursing home, I did not have to go to hospice, and I did not have to finish my obituary.

I have my life and I continue to give back as Catholic Charities has given to me. I give back through working with other veterans. I began an organization named the Young Entrepreneurs of the Universe, or YEU. YEU also has a veterans' initiative: we help veterans become heroes at home.

I am also a wheelchair archer who shoots with her right hand and her mouth. I shoot with Olympians and Para Olympians across the country. My statistics are 299 out of 300, which means that I shoot a 299 overall, with a 300 being perfect regarding wins. I have aspirations to participate in the Para Olympics. I tried to make it to London, but I did not have the sponsorship. However, the dream is still there.

During my journey I also received a lot of support from my church and the VA. However, I stayed with God and I would not have been able to pursue these dreams if Catholic Charities did not take a chance and give me a home and a permanent place to live.

In support of Veterans, I suggest increasing the number of supportive housing units for disabled Veterans and for women Veterans, especially wheelchair-bound Veterans. I would also suggest a program of transportation for disabled veterans. Another suggestion I have is to examine the process and regulations for Veterans to qualify for some government housing subsidies, vouchers or other programs. Look especially at the total dollar amount appropriate for security deposits for Veterans.

Members of the committee, I thank you very much for this opportunity to address you!