

**Statement for the Record
Of
C. A. Wilson, CEO
St. Paul's Senior Homes & Services**

**Submitted to the U.S. House of Representatives Subcommittee on Insurance, Housing
and Community Opportunity of the House Committee on Financial Services
In Connection with the Hearing:
"Housing for Heroes: Examining How Federal Programs Can Better Serve Veterans"
Friday, September 14, 2012
Room 2128
Rayburn House Office Building**

St. Paul's Senior Homes & Services (St. Paul's) appreciates the opportunity to submit a **statement of support** for the record of the Subcommittee's September 14th 2012 hearing on veteran housing.

Legislative bill **H.R. 5861**, "Elderly Homeless Veterans Housing Grant Pilot Program" addresses **permanent** housing with services (meals, counseling, and social supports) for older veterans age 55 and over who have challenges limiting their ability to work or perform activities of daily living due to substance abuse, longstanding PTSD, mental health issues, medical conditions, or other disabilities.

Current programs address the needs of younger homeless Veterans and include transitional housing, job training, and rehabilitative counseling to re-enter civilian life. According to the Department of Veterans Affairs, the number of homeless Vietnam era veterans exceeds the number of fatalities that occurred during the war.¹ Conditions linked to increased risk of death among homeless veterans over 60 is 21.3% versus 9.43% for homeless non-veterans.² However, there are no existing programs to serve homeless, vulnerable older veterans in the specific age group of 55 and older.

Mr. Ron Gilmore who served as a Third Class Petty Officer, U.S. Navy, during the Vietnam War stated, *"If there had been such a place as H.R. 5861 proposes, I would have gone there, and I would not have been afraid and feel so alone."*

The goal, with passage of H.R. 5861, would be to establish two non-profit sponsored, demonstration, "housing first" with services programs in the United States. These will provide **permanent**, non-conditional housing for several hundred older homeless veterans. The model could be replicated nationwide to address the needs of frail, medically challenged older homeless veterans for today, as well as serve combat veterans for generations to come.

Additionally, each of the programs would create much needed jobs in their respective cities.

According to the San Diego Regional Task Force on the Homeless, "We All Count 2012 Annual Homeless Census," veterans comprise 17% of the overall homeless population of San Diego County; nationwide, veterans comprise 12% of those homeless on any given night.

In early 2011, St. Paul's held many focus group meetings that were attended by community leaders of Veteran's agencies, legislative offices, and support groups. The purpose of the meetings was to establish the need and viability for a "housing first" model of care for older veterans. The overwhelming response acknowledged the acute need and gave support for St. Paul's plans to pursue a permanent "housing first" project with services for older homeless Veterans.

St. Paul's Senior Homes & Services recommends adoption of H.R. 5861 which is in keeping with Secretary of Veterans Affairs, General Shinseki's commitment to end veteran homelessness by 2015. This goal, once reached, will give older homeless veterans a place to call home where their physical, social and emotional needs are supported in a long-term housing facility. There they will be welcomed and accepted just as they are; addictions and other challenges notwithstanding.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide the committee with a statement on the need for the adoption of H.R. 5861. St. Paul's Senior Homes & Services would be happy to answer any questions the committee has at any time. Please contact Cheryl Wilson c/o projectmanager@stpaulseniors.org , or (619) 239-6900.

Respectfully submitted,



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¹ United States Department of Veterans Affairs, —Homeless Veterans: Overview of Homelessness, Updated August 31, 2009.

² Data Report, National Survey of Homeless Veterans in 100,000 Homes Campaign Communities, November 2011.