

February 24, 2015

Representative Nathanson  
900 Court Street, NE, Room H-280  
Salem OR 97301

Dear Representative Nathanson:

We are writing to you today regarding HB 2230. It is our understanding that this bill creates a "no wrong door" policy for veterans within state agencies. In addition, it creates a method for information to go from state agencies to the Oregon Department of Veterans Affairs (ODVA). We are very supportive of this concept, and appreciate your goal of connecting veterans to their benefits and support systems.

Oregon Housing and Community Services (OHCS)'s mission is to provide stable and affordable housing and engage leaders to develop integrated statewide policy that addresses poverty and provides opportunity for Oregonians. As you know, OHCS does not generally provide direct service to Oregonians who are experiencing housing instability or are in need of an affordable place to call home. We work instead with agencies across the state that provide direct service to Oregonians. In particular, Community Action agencies across the state provide housing stabilization services such as emergency rent assistance or eviction prevention, and more.

Community Action agencies serve all thirty-six Oregon counties. Their statewide organization recently invited the director of ODVA to speak at a meeting to discuss the very goal that drives this current legislation.

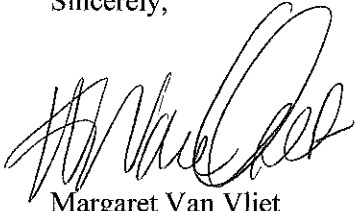
Over the last eighteen months, OHCS and partners have been working to implement HB 2417 (2013). HB 2417 added an additional \$5 to a document recording fee. These funds go directly to help veterans prevent or end homelessness, access affordable housing, and access homeownership. We have been working with experts both from the Oregon Department of Veterans Affairs as well as the Federal VA, and service provider experts to craft the best possible programs for veterans with these dollars.

Both Oregon Housing and Community Services and our Community Action agency partners are committed to serving veterans in the most effective way possible. We understand the importance of connecting veterans both to the Federal Veterans Administration system and Oregon Department of Veterans Affairs through the County Veterans Service Officers.

Over the next year, we would like to work together to craft effective, efficient strategies to ensure these connections become part of our daily work. We believe that together, we can arrive at a solution that will meet the spirit of this legislation for these programs, while recognizing the unique relationship OHCS has with clients and partners. We would be happy to report back about our progress to the Committee either during the interim or during the February 2016 Legislative Session.

Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to be in touch with either of us. Thank you for the opportunity to improve services to Oregon's veterans.

Sincerely,



Margaret Van Vliet  
Director  
Oregon Housing and Community Services



Jim Tierney  
Board President  
Community Action Partnership of Oregon

cc: Representative John Huffman, District 59