

Testimony of William Wise  
Senate Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs Committee  
Housing, Transportation and Community Development Sub-Committee  
“Ending Veterans’ Homelessness”  
10 November 2009

Thank you, Chairman Menendez, and Members of the Sub-Committee for giving me the opportunity to testify today and for your leadership in addressing the critical issue of Veterans’ Homelessness.

My name is William Wise. I am currently a participant in a residential homeless Veterans’ program sponsored by the New Jersey Department of Military and Veterans Affairs called Veterans’ Haven. The two year program, has given me the opportunity to put my life back together.

Let me provide you with some back ground into my situation.

I’m a 57 year old man originally from Washington, DC. I’m a Veteran of the Viet Nam War. I had been a productive member of the community – holding a job and owning my own home.

But I made a number of bad choices due to addiction and mental health issues. Over time I lost my job, lost my home and ended up residing in my sister’s basement. For almost 3 years I remained homeless.

In order to try to address my issues, I tried short term - 4 month programs. These programs never provided me with enough time to deal with the core issues that I needed to address. And without addressing those core issues I continued to falter.

Finally I was referred to Veterans Haven.

Veterans Haven a 2 year residential program has allowed me the time to deal with the core issues that caused me to become jobless and homeless. There's an analogy I gave to the New Jersey Department of Military and Veterans' Affairs Staff when I was first asked to talk about my situation and possibly provide testimony today.

My situation was comparable to someone moving from room to room blowing a fuse each time they entered a new room. The short term solution had been to try to fix the fuse. But that was only a temporary fix because the problem was actually the wiring.

I am currently nearing the end of my participation in the Veterans Haven program. As I think you can tell, the program has made a difference in my life. It is has been an opportunity to deal with issues that have existed and escalated over a period of many years. Programs like this should be available to more Veterans allowing them the opportunity to get back on their feet and resume normal lives.