

Written Testimony of Mike Brown
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Housing and Urban Development and Related Agencies
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My name is Mike Brown, and I am truly honored to be here today. I would like to personally thank Senator Patty Murray for inviting me to travel here from Walla Walla, Washington to testify at this hearing.

I am a 54 year old former Vietnam era Army veteran. I came from a military background. My father was a career Air Force fighter pilot in Korea and Vietnam. In 1994 I was a happily married father of two. I worked as a Transit driver for the City of Kennewick, Washington when I found methamphetamine. Due to that relationship, it did not take long to lose everything. My job, my family, my dignity and my home. The next nine years I spent using, on the streets and avoiding the law. Finally at my lowest point in 2005 a Superior Court Judge gave me a last chance to get help or I was facing prison.

In late 2005 I sought help at the WWVA Medical Center in Walla Walla, Washington. Where I learned about addiction, and the things I needed to change. The first thing I had to do was surrender, and accept help. After graduating from treatment I went to the Corps of Recovery Discovery (CORD) a grant per diem transitional housing program and started pulling my life together. I spent two years there, learning how to live again and become a functioning part of society. I moved into my own apartment in 2007 and started working full time for the (CORD) program. Since 2005 I have gone from living on the streets, eating out of dumpsters to living independently, working full time and this past weekend I was able to give my daughter away at her wedding which was one of the proudest moments of my life.

Through a lot of hard work I now am an assistant program manager and case manager helping other veterans regain their lives back and navigating the same road.

The difference for the vets coming behind me is now there is HUD vash vouchers to enable them to attain housing in a much quicker and affordable way.

We refer those Veterans that are ready to transition to the other part of our team at the VA for application for those vouchers. The wait for the vouchers has been reasonable and timely.

In my housing unit alone, there are seven veterans who have benefited from the vouchers. This has enabled them to be on their own and continue to move forward. Some are working full time; some are attending higher education and are able to live within their means. Currently they all are doing well, and making positive changes towards their goals.

One of the barriers in our small community is the lack of gainful employment that pays a living wage. The vouchers are a huge benefit to enable these veterans to independent living.

I personally would like to thank all the other members on the panel. I do look forward to sharing more about my experiences with Veterans. If there are any questions I will do my best to answer them.

Once again, thank you all for allowing me to attend this important hearing.

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