



**Commission on Veterans Affairs**  
**Testimony on FY 27 Operating Budget**  
**April 8, 2026**  
**Michael Wilson, Chair**

The Commission on Veterans Affairs wishes to thank the residents of the County and the County Council for their combined support for Veterans for funding programs that benefit the quality of life for Veterans and military families. We recommend the following:

**Vouchers for Homeless Veterans and their Families** We support the funding levels allocated toward unhoused person programs. We are concerned, however, about the proposed operating budget's lack of permanent housing investment in alleviating adult homelessness *which includes homeless veterans*. We base this concern on our review of the CE proposed operating budget:

**Expanded investments to support unhoused individuals:**

**\$2 million for the Short-Term Housing and Resolution Program (SHaRP).**

**\$2 million for overflow emergency shelter support.**

**\$1.2 million support for adult shelter.**

**\$439,000 to connect services to unsheltered residents.**

65% (all line items except for SHARP) of the CE's operating budget are investments in temporary housing, not permanent supportive housing or rapid rehousing support.

The need for programs leading toward permanent housing is acute, especially for homeless veterans. The VA's HUD-VASH program, a collaborative program which pairs HUD's Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) rental assistance with VA case management and supportive services, is not providing any new vouchers this year. Though County funds may be used in emergencies for VA eligible veterans, we recommend that the County work with the County's United State Congress members to have the VA issue needed VA HUD-Vash vouchers to VA eligible veterans for permanent supportive housing who are currently unhoused so County dollars do not need to be used for much needed permanent supportive housing.

**Serving Together** – The County provides funding for Serving Together through Behavioral Health & Crisis Services. We have found Veterans are able to work closely with professional care coordinators knowledgeable about the resources and eligibility for any needed programs for service members, veterans, and military families. We support the County Executive's recommended 2.5% Inflationary Adjustment (IA) for non-profit organizations that hold a contract with the County. Therefore, we recommend the County Council approve the recommended CE budget containing 2.5% IA, making the FY27 contract total \$186,890.73.

**Warrior Canine Connection** - This program works with recovering Veterans to train dogs to act as service dogs for other wounded Warriors. This program is based out of Walter Reed National Military Medical Center and has a training location in Boyds. The County provided a Capital Cost Share Grant, and the funds are to be used to help design and construct a puppy breeding and enrichment center. We ask for consideration of any additional funding that may be needed.

The Commission is working in collaboration with the Maryland Military Coalition and the Military Officers Association of America (MOAA) to establish a **Veterans Treatment Court** in Montgomery County. Judge Koch of the District Court has put together a committee with the goal of establishing one. We would greatly appreciate your support for this important initiative.

We are currently working on establishing a Communication and Outreach Planning committee to promote programs and services that benefit Veterans and military families, including Blue Star and Gold Star families. This will include a speaker's bureau. The Commission does not have a budget to assist with costs associated with this. We request \$5,000 year for meeting or advertising expenses that may occur.

In conclusion, again thank you for your continued support.