

United States Senate

COMMITTEES

BANKING, HOUSING, AND
URBAN AFFAIRS

COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND
TRANSPORTATION

HOMELAND SECURITY AND
GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

VETERANS' AFFAIRS

SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON AGING

October 9, 2020

Ms. Kate Gallego
Mayor
City of Phoenix
Phoenix City Hall
200 W. Washington Street
Phoenix, AZ 85003

Mayor Gallego:

I am writing to request support on behalf of U.S.VETS - Phoenix. U.S.VETS is one of the largest housing providers for veterans at risk of homelessness. Through no fault of its own, the Phoenix chapter is experiencing a sudden and unexpected loss of its office lease that threatens its service to Arizona veterans.

As part of the larger U.S.VETS organization, the Phoenix chapter of U.S.VETS supports Arizona veterans at risk of homelessness with early intervention, rapid rehousing, and employment support services. In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Phoenix chapter continues to serve 182 Arizona veterans and expects requests for assistance to increase as the economic effects of the pandemic worsen and extend into 2021.

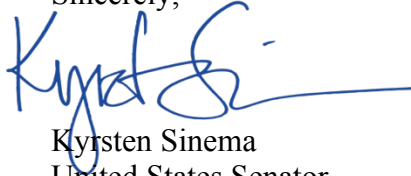
While U.S.VETS - Phoenix is confident it can meet the challenges veterans are facing, circumstances outside of the organization's control threaten to derail its services precisely at the time they are needed most. Currently, the chapter operates out of an office space near Osborn Road and Central Avenue that is easily accessible to veterans throughout the Phoenix metro area. Although the organization expected to continue its lease into 2021, their property manager unexpectedly decided not to renew their agreement and refused to consider a month-to-month option that would give the organization proper time to raise funds to secure a new site, prepare program participants, and transition to a new location. The organization will be forced to move from its current office space at the end of 2020.

This unexpected news threatens to complicate U.S.VETS - Phoenix's provision of services to veterans most at risk of homelessness, who often rely on in-person support. Although the chapter has identified a new location that would minimize disruptions to services, it lacks the funds on short notice to enter into a lease agreement. While the organization would consider a loan to meet its funding shortfall, its participation in certain federal programs precludes it from borrowing funds. Direct support from governments and private donors is therefore crucial to ensure that U.S.VETS - Phoenix remains operational and accessible.

There is no greater mission than honoring our commitment to those who have served our country. Servicemembers, veterans, and their families deserve our gratitude and respect for the sacrifices they make to protect our freedom. My team will do everything it can to identify and connect U.S.VETS - Phoenix with sources of federal funding. Likewise, I request that you support this call for assistance by working with your staff to identify potential financial support for the organization. As our country deals with the health and economic challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, trusted and effective veteran service organizations like U.S.VETS - Phoenix ensure that Arizona veterans at risk of homelessness are able to access supportive housing and job counseling services to get back on their feet.

In accordance with all existing agency rules, regulations, and ethical guidelines, I respectfully ask that you give this request for support full and fair consideration. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Kyrsten Sinema", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Kyrsten Sinema
United States Senator

CC: Arizona Governor Doug Ducey
Maricopa County Board of Supervisors
Arizona Department of Veterans' Services Director Col. Wanda Wright