

Feb. 19, 2012

Good afternoon/evening Chairs and Members of the Finance Committee. My name is Natalie Cooke, I am a Program Manager for the Veteran Support Services at the Chrysalis Center and most recently have become the Program Manager for the Victory Gardens Supportive Housing Program in Newington.

I am in support of **Bill Number 648** to provide funding for case management services at Victory Gardens, a supportive project for homeless Veterans and families at the U.S.A. Department of Veterans Affairs on the Newington Campus.

Case management services are the "Support" in Supportive Housing. Case management services are customized to meet the needs of the Veterans to ensure housing stability and to maximize the Veterans ability to live independently. Services are intended to deliver and promote integration into their communities to the greatest extent possible and appropriate.

Research has shown that supportive housing has positive effects on housing stability, connection to job readiness training/services and employment, mental and physical health, and school attendance. Individuals in supportive housing live more stable and productive lives. Cost studies have revealed that supportive housing decreases use of homeless shelters, hospitals, emergency rooms, jails and prisons stays.

I have worked within the Supportive Housing arena for over 13 years and my highlight has always been witnessing the transformation. When an individual realizes they are valued part of society and that they matter. When they understand that they are the community in which they live.

Victory Gardens will provide homeless Veterans a new start in new permanent housing apartments and townhouses with support services by Chrysalis Center, Inc. Chrysalis Center, Inc. has provided supportive case management services to homeless individuals for 18 years with great success.

Your support of **Bill Number 648** will ensure the vital support services dollars are in place for the Veterans at Victory Gardens.

Sincerely,

Natalie Cooke