

Thank you for the opportunity to address this committee this afternoon. My name is Linda Bazan and I'm the Residential Director at the Holland Rescue Mission. We thank you for the opportunity to present three brief reasons to substantiate an increase in the ESP funding. First, we are a homeless shelter in Holland, Michigan, servicing an average of 150 homeless men, women, and children per night at two separate residential facilities. In 2016, we provided approximately 55,000 bed nights and served well over 150,000 meals. While there are those who report that homelessness is on a decline, we at the Holland Rescue Mission are not experiencing that decline. For example, in 2016, at our women/children facility, we experienced an 8-week period of steadily higher occupancy than we've experienced in 15 years. As you can imagine, the expenses to provide housing for 55,000 bed nights and 150,000 meals is substantial. Add to that the expenses to provide 24/7/365 supervision and case management, as well as staff for building and grounds and the financial requirements can seem staggering. To that end, we are currently blessed to be beneficiaries of the ESP monies so that we can continue to provide excellent hospitality to those in great need. We would also be grateful for an increase to meet the needs that are not decreasing.

Second, in regards to our programming, we firmly believe in the value of work, both as it benefits the individual and as it benefits our community and state. To that end, we require our guests in our Emergency Shelter Program to be working full-time or seeking full-time employment. Guesstimating that of the 66% of our guests who are unemployed when they move in, 80 to 90% of them are gaining employment while they stay with us. If we use the minimum wage figure of \$8.90 for the year 2016, we can guesstimate that in 2016 our guests generated almost \$12 million in wages from having participated in our program. We are blessed to provide programming for our guests that urge them to move forward in their life situations. To that end, we are not using the ESP funds to warehouse homeless people. We use these funds to provide critical emergency care and to move our guests toward lives of productivity and independence, thus moving them away from government support and dependency.

Third, we are extremely excited for the implementation of our Gateway Academy. This is a year-long program for our guests who desire to bring an end to the reasons for their homelessness. The students in Gateway Academy live in our residential facilities. But their Academy experience transpires at our newly renovated Gateway Ministry Center. Here, they learn production team skills, lean manufacturing, lift truck operations and trucking and logistics operations in our Production Center and in our Gateway Thrift Store. And in the work experience, the students' lives are intersecting with the individual shoppers from the surrounding community as the students provide cashiering, assistance, and customer service. We believe that we have only begun to tap the synergy that will be created between our community and the Holland Rescue Mission. The possibilities are truly exhilarating. The extra funds generated by this ESP increase would surely aid in the costs to provide this training that has great life-changing potential.

We are indeed living in times where there are many in great need. We thank you for your time and thought regarding the very many who will benefit from this ESP increase.