

SAN FRANCISCO VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMISSION

MAY 12, 2026 MEETING

**PUBLIC COMMENTS SUBMITTED IN SUPPORT OF “OLD BUSINESS” ACTIONABLE
AGENDA ITEM ABOUT VETERANS JUSTICE COURT:**

Hi Ms. Murphy,

I am writing in support of Commissioner Russanoff's motion to find a proactive solution to the budget cuts that would impact the Veteran's Justice Court's ability to maintain the 2 positions serving our city's most vulnerable veterans.

As a Licensed Clinical Social Worker, I understand financial deficit issues impacting the funding of important programs. I also know how important it is for underserved and vulnerable individuals/populations to have access to advocates for mental health services and support to navigate the tedious administrative tasks required to apply for and sustain benefits.

In doing some research, it is clear that there is funding to be accessed for community programs such as grants/partnerships through the Chan Zuckerberg foundation.

<https://chanzuckerberg.com/>

Hopefully a creative solution such as this one might be considered as part of keeping our SF residents out of the burdened criminal justice system through diversion programs such as the VJC that is proven to be successful in addressing recidivism.

Thank you for your time!

Warmly,

Claudine

Mrs. Murphy,

I would like to thank you for taking a minute out of your busy day to read my email.

I would also like you to rethink the cutting of the VJC. Some of these veterans have given more than just time to this country. They've given their sanity, their health, and

some their soul... Kicking them while they're down is pretty un-American in my opinion and could possibly cost the city more money in the long run. They would be lumped in with all the other homeless/unhoused people in the city. I realize that there are many programs out there to help people in these situations but I kindly ask you to think of someone who's in that situation possibly only because they don't know how to gain access to healthcare that they probably are already owed by the VA.

Humanly it is the right thing to do to try and give veterans the chance to deal with their situations in a manner that better suits them and fiscally for every veteran that ends up gaining access to the VA healthcare system is one less person in the already overcrowded emergency room and possibly even gaining disability income to further lessen the financial responsibilities of the city.

Again, thank you for your time.

Forest M Brandon

Veteran Surf Alliance

USMC

Subject: Preserving Access to Veterans Court: Protecting Critical Outreach and Case Management Services

I am writing to express serious concern regarding the proposed elimination of the therapist and case manager positions that are responsible for identifying, engaging, and guiding veterans into San Francisco's Veterans Court program.

While the Veterans Court itself may remain formally intact, removing the very roles that connect veterans to the program effectively undermines its function. Without trained professionals to conduct outreach, assess needs, and coordinate entry into treatment-based alternatives, many eligible veterans will never access the court at all. In practice, this risks turning a proven intervention into an underutilized or inaccessible resource.

Importantly, these roles are especially critical for veterans who do not qualify for federal VA benefits—often the most vulnerable and highest-risk individuals. As noted in recent reporting, San Francisco's Veterans Court is distinctive in that it serves all veterans, including those who may be ineligible for VA healthcare due to less-than-honorable discharges, difficulty proving service-connected conditions, or inability to

navigate a complex federal system. The therapist and case manager play an indispensable role in identifying these veterans, helping them access alternative care and services, and ensuring they are not left behind. Without this support, these individuals are the most likely to fall through the cracks entirely.

The human implications are significant. Veterans who come into contact with the justice system often face complex challenges, including trauma, substance use, and housing instability. The therapist and case manager serve as the critical bridge between these individuals and structured support. Without that bridge, many veterans—especially those excluded from VA systems—will default back into traditional court processing, losing access to coordinated care, accountability structures, and the opportunity for stabilization. The result is a higher likelihood of recidivism, worsening health outcomes, and prolonged homelessness.

The fiscal implications are equally concerning. San Francisco already spends approximately \$31,000 per person annually on the criminalization of homelessness through policing, court involvement, and incarceration. For high-needs individuals, including many veterans, emergency and urgent medical care costs can exceed \$182,000 per year. These are reactive expenditures that do not address root causes and often repeat year after year.

Eliminating the therapist and case manager positions is likely to shift more individuals into these high-cost systems. Without early intervention and coordinated diversion—particularly for those who lack access to federally funded services—costs associated with booking, prosecution, monitoring, and emergency healthcare will rise, often producing little long-term benefit and creating expenses that are difficult or impossible to recover.

By contrast, Veterans Court and similar targeted interventions have demonstrated measurable cost savings and improved outcomes when individuals are successfully engaged. Specialized court participation has been shown to reduce annual per-person costs over time, while supportive services offer more efficient pathways to stability than repeated emergency responses.

In this context, the therapist and case manager are not ancillary roles; they are essential infrastructure. They ensure that the City's investment in Veterans Court actually reaches the population it is designed to serve—especially those who have no other safety net. Removing them risks both human harm and increased public expense.

I respectfully urge the commission to reconsider the elimination of these positions and to recognize their role as a cost-effective, outcome-driven component of San Francisco's response to justice-involved veterans. Preserving these services protects not only vulnerable individuals, but also the City's broader fiscal and public safety interests.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Ken Horiszny

Sausalito, CA

Subject: Access to Veterans Court

I am writing with my concerns regarding the elimination of two positions that identify, and support veterans that are not in the VA system into San Francisco's Veterans Court program.

Removing the two roles that connect the most at risk veterans to the program is a tragedy in the making. Without trained individuals to identify these veterans, and coordinate entry into the very support designed to help them, many of the most at risk veterans will never access the court which is a tragedy for them, for San Francisco, and the public at large.

These roles are especially critical for veterans who don't qualify for federal VA benefits—often the most vulnerable and highest-risk individuals. San Francisco's Veterans Court is a role model nationwide in that it serves ALL veterans, including those who may be ineligible for VA healthcare due inability to navigate the mountains of paperwork required. The therapist and case manager are critical in identifying these veterans, helping them access the services they have earned through their service. Without this support, they are the most likely to fall through the cracks entirely which often leads to substance abuse, long term homelessness, and petty crime.

Without the support, many veterans—especially those outside VA systems—will end up back into traditional court, losing access to care, accountability structures, and the opportunity for stabilization. The result is a higher likelihood of recidivism, poor health outcomes, and long term homelessness.

Financially eliminating these positions is penny wise and pound foolish. A single stint in the hospital or rehab costs San Francisco far more than the cost of the salaries proposed for elimination. The human cost is far worse, and a stain on all other veterans, the Veterans Court and on the Commission itself. These are the very men and women who have spent years of their lives protecting America. They need and deserve our support.

I urge the commission to lobby against the elimination of these positions, and to help San Francisco recognize their role as more than cost-effective, and in keeping with the commitment made to all veterans to support them just as they have protected us. How can we possibly leave these men and women behind?

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Lynn Keller

San Francisco Mayor Daniel Lurie,

I have become aware of the plan to cut Human Services funding for the diversion program, Veterans Justice Court (VJC). Providing treatment for conditions arising from military service is Our Duty. Case management and therapy are the tools needed to succeed in recovery and rebuilding. Defaulting to Criminal court looks like turning our backs on our Veterans.

The VJC is a necessary component to ensure all Veterans are provided pertinent care after military service. Prioritizing our support to guard against homelessness and self medicating, helping them navigate life after service is, once again, OUR DUTY!

The intent to cut vulnerable Veterans' care is a deplorable budget consideration. I do not support leaving behind Veterans who sacrificed to protect and serve US. Unthinkable!

Sincerely,

Deborah J Nesbitt