



04/20/2023

Dear Members of the Vermont House Committee on Housing & General Affairs:

Thank you for inviting me before this committee today to give discuss H.391 and proposed amendments to S.100.

My name is Sandrine Kibuey, I am the Director of Housing Advocacy Programs at the Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity, one of state's five community action agencies that addresses fundamental issues of economic, social, environmental, and racial justice, and work with people to achieve economic independence. Our Statewide Housing Advocacy Programs promotes inclusive, affordable housing for all.

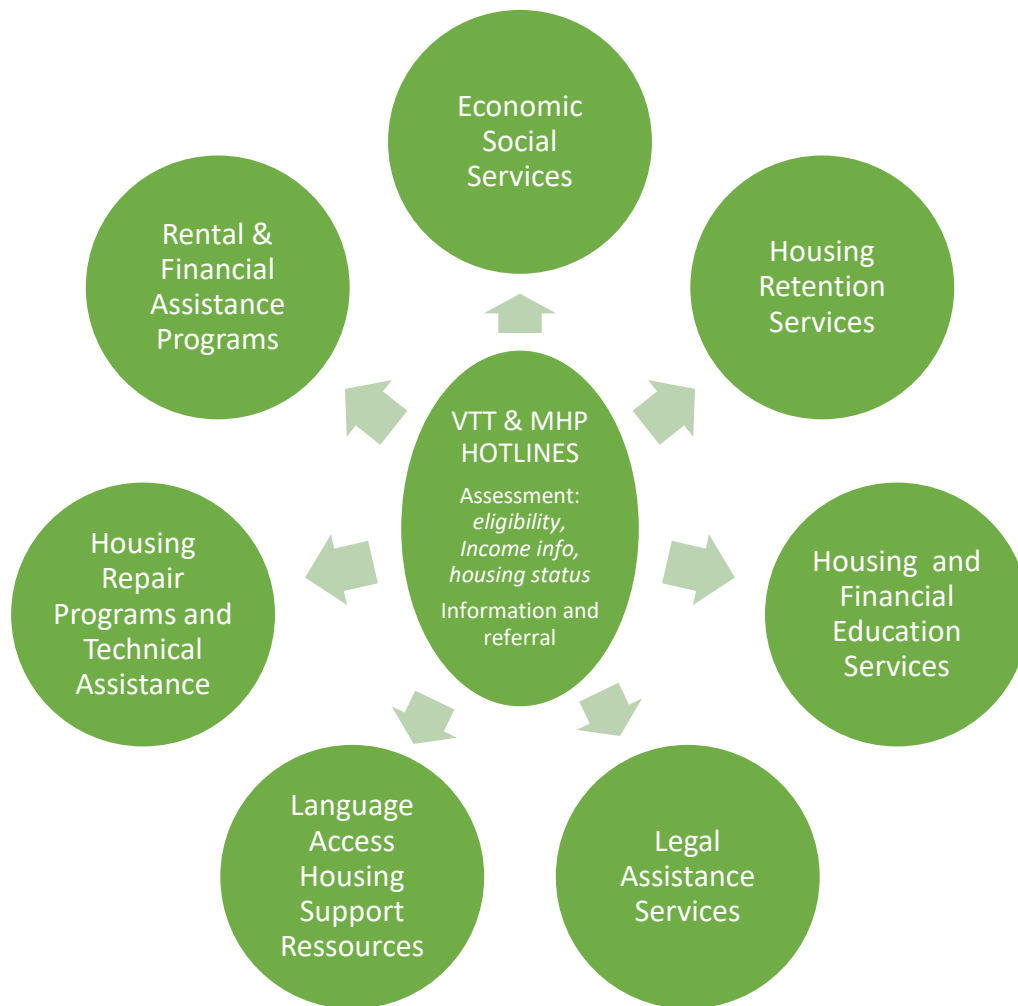
My testimony today is to support the fundamentals of rental financial assistance as an effective homelessness prevention and housing retention tool. Our review of the draft proposed amendments to S.100 by our partner organizations, VSHA and VLA, is positive. We do support the Rent Arrears Fund and legal assistance language as proposed as our long and strong relationship and common goal with VSHA and VLA to provide relief to the many Vermonters in need of assistance ask for our support into making sure that this proposition be considered and funding allocated in a timely manner.

However, we would welcome the opportunity to host an Office of Rental Housing Stabilization Services as we strongly believe that this type of program would be better housed within the CVOEO Housing Advocacy Programs.

Indeed, CVOEO and its Housing Advocacy Programs' expertise, proven successful and comprehensive housing support programs, and relationships with vulnerable communities is well known and respected. The Housing Advocacy Programs are the only statewide housing advocacy resource and support program in Vermont, operating two hotlines serving more than 1,700 tenants and mobile home residents with tenancy issues a year and educating more than 400 renters and mobile home residents about their rights and responsibilities and attaining skills to maintain healthy and safe housing. We also provide consultation, information, referrals, education, advocacy, and technical assistance for people and organizations about Fair housing law through our Fair housing project.

In addition, we have embedded language-accessible housing education and financial services that will soon be provided directly to service recipients in the language they speak through our expanded Community Ambassadors Program.

As you can see illustrated in the graphic below, CVOEP HAP has the existing structure, services and systems in place to provide the crucial relief needed not only to tenants and mobile home residents but also the possibility to address issues presented by landlords:



Based on what is proposed, for a year of operation, **CVOEO HAP 2.5 M budget** has been calculated as follow:

**Administration \$200,000**

Administration will support 2 FTE all direct project administration costs: advertisement/background check fees, office supplies, postage, staff mileage liability insurance, service contracts, rent, utilities, telephone, space maintenance, and staffing:

**Rental Arrears Fund: 2.3 M**

We do believe that investment to our statewide rental housing support, educative and advocacy program will not only decrease cost in creating a new office but would erase unnecessary barriers, promote direct connection to the most vulnerable and make access to fairer and more inclusive services therefore give the State a better return on its investment.

Thank you for your attention.

Sandrine Kibuey Director  
 Housing Advocacy Programs/ CVOEO  
[skibuey@cvoeo.org](mailto:skibuey@cvoeo.org)