

The General and Housing Committee has been at the forefront of the conversation, especially over the last three years, about the best use of funding for housing. We have seen an historic investment of federal and State funds for housing that proposes to alleviate homelessness by providing one of the three all-important legs to the stool: the units needed. Between programs created since the beginning of the pandemic and those that already existed, housing built, created, or rehabilitated by using State and federal funds has reached over 1,500 units an incredible success story accomplished in a tri-partisan way in the General Assembly and by reaching across the aisle between the Legislative and Executive Branches. We have experienced great success in housing those experiencing homelessness, as well as providing the necessary services.

Unfortunately, the Budget Adjustment Act (BAA) proposal from the Administration makes no provision for any of the key housing programs that have been successful in the recent past, nor does it fund sections 43, 44, and 45 of Act 47 that promise to keep Vermonters housed when faced with eviction.

To prevent eviction, the Act includes three programs. The General and Housing Committee urges that what was enacted last year now be funded as part of the Budget Adjustment Act.

- Diversion services \$ 400,000 (statewide)
- Tenant full representation 2 year pilot \$1,025,000 (just 2 counties)
- Rent assistance for VSHA \$2,500,000

Sec. 43 of Act 47 delineates eviction diversion services. These services would be used to provide tenants and landlords additional services that would lead them to resources in a way that is more integrative than 211.

Sec. 44 of Act 47 is the tenant representation pilot. The budget for a two-year pilot for just Windsor and Lamoille, 2 attorneys + supervision and support is \$1,025,000.

Sec. 45 of Act 47 is a back-rent assistance program. What is proposed would not be a duplicate of HOP, as it would extend assistance to tenant households up to 80% of AMI (as opposed to 30% in the HOP program) and would not be limited to three months 'back rent, as does the HOP program. According to testimony from VSHA, these funds would be available immediately to landlords in the Landlord Relief Program, with rules written to conform to the original CRF back-rent program from 2020/2021.

We also urge the House Appropriations Committee to consider using the BAA to provide the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board and other housing organizations with increased funding to continue the substantial work that has been accomplished in building, creating, and rehabilitating housing units. VHCB has applications of approximately \$20M for projects in the pipeline for this fiscal year. And in order to signal to developers that projects in the fall will be able to be considered, they are asking for an additional \$30M. These additional funds would signal to developers that they can hire the necessary architects and planners to ready the workload without interruption.

Further, we support the request from VHFA for additional funds (\$25M) for the newly renamed Middle Income Housing Program, along with the language changes proposed by VHFA, which

will allow VHFA to refine the program parameters in a way that will retain the public investment in the housing built with these funds.