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Sent: Wednesday, March 1, 2023 10:24 AM
To: Testimony 2023 <Testimony2023@leg.state.vt.us>
Cc: Peter Kelman <phkelman@gmail.com>
Subject: [External] Testimony regarding 2023-24 appropriations for housing and homelessness

[External]

Original sent to Appropriations Committee (testimony2023@leg.state.vt.us). It may be too late for any of you blind on this email to do so, but not too late for you to contact your Senate and House representatives.

I am writing as a private citizen of Vermont, although I am an active member of the Montpelier Homelessness Task Force, a former member of the disbanded Montpelier Housing Task Force, the coordinator of volunteers for the 2022-23 Montpelier emergency overnight overflow shelter (@ChristChurch), and the on-site coordinator for 3 Homelessness Days of Action events held in December 2022 at 3 Barre-Berlin-Montpelier motels participating in the Transitional Housing Program.

As we all know, homelessness is a complex social and economic problem with myriad causes and a wide range of potential mitigations, none being a "silver bullet." And I hope we all believe that no human being is more deserving of empathy and appropriate assistance than any other human being. So, I am concerned when I read and hear about various appropriation bills that appear to give preference to those who are deemed by some sort of definition as being "most vulnerable." I am similarly troubled by bills (and regulations) that require people who are unhoused to meet qualifications that turn out to be significant barriers to entry for some people being sheltered anywhere.

We should not be imposing a "Sophie's Choice" on the many hundreds of people in Vermont who are currently unhoused. Every person and family that is unhoused in Vermont has a unique story and probably unique needs; appropriations need to be adequate to meet the needs of every one of them and the rules governing the uses of funds need to be both flexible enough to meet unique needs while at the same time holding state, county, municipal, and private entities accountable for *results*. This principle would apply to funding and programs for both temporary/emergency congregate (and non-congregate) shelter and a range of truly affordable permanent housing ranging from SROs to single-family homes and everything in between.

In solidarity,

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