

Vermont Affordable Housing Coalition

2014 State Legislative Priorities

BUDGET PRIORITIES

Create new and preserve existing affordable homes for low-income Vermonters:

- Provide full statutory funding for the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board - \$17.7 million based on July official revenue forecast.
- Work to secure additional funding to preserve existing, affordable housing developments with expiring federal funding.

Reduce and prevent homelessness:

- Increase the Emergency Solutions Grant Program from \$800,000 to \$1.2 million.
- Double the number of families housed with the Vermont Rental Subsidy Program by increasing funding from \$500,000 to \$1 million.
- Expand the Family Supportive Housing three-county demonstration program statewide (current funding level: \$400,000).
- Further enhance Community Housing Grants (current funding level: \$2.9 million).
- Maintain adequate funding for Emergency Housing for vulnerable Vermonters; clarify definition of “vulnerable” to include people with documented disabilities and families with children over six years.

Supplement Section 8 rental assistance and other federal housing funds lost due to budget cuts, including CDBG, HOME, Public Housing Capital funds, and USDA Rural Development programs.

Provide stable affordable housing and services for people with special needs to live more independently in settings they prefer, while avoiding the higher cost of institutional care:

- Support an overall appropriation level of \$735,000 for the Home Access Program, a \$200,000 increase.
- Maintain current funding for Mental Health Vouchers at \$1.42 million. Likewise, support level funding for Mental Health Housing Recovery and Housing Contingency Funds at \$495,075 and \$391,734 respectively.
- Join LeadingAge Vermont in requesting that \$864,000 of the \$6.6m in Medicaid savings be reinvested to supplement the Support and Services at Home (SASH) network, to expand Wellness Nursing, mileage reimbursement for reaching participants in remote areas, and training for partner agencies. In addition, support a 3% increase to the DAIL grant to fund SASH implementation, including Housing and Supportive Services (HASS) grants. The total request is for \$1,908,081.
- Support a 3% increase in the Medicaid Assistive Community Care Services (ACCS) Program, about a \$1.10 *per diem* increase. Each \$1/day increase costs approximately \$350,000 in Global Commitment Funds (GCF).
- Support level funding for Vermont’s home sharing programs at \$327,163.
- Support level funding for Transitional Housing for Ex-Offenders at \$6.6 million.
- Support Pathways Vermont in requesting an additional \$800,000 to replace expiring federal SAMSHA funding. Pathways operates throughout most of Vermont and represents the first adaptation of the “Housing First” model to a rural state. It currently receives a total of \$1.41 million in State funding from the Vermont Departments of Corrections (\$831K) and Mental Health (\$579K).

Support a State appropriation for mortgage and foreclosure prevention counseling through the NeighborWorks HomeOwnership Centers.

Support First Stop Funding for CVOEO’s Mobile Home Project at the FY 14 level of \$70,000.

Support increased funding for Municipal and Regional Planning. The Vermont Association of Planning and Development Agencies (VAPDA) requests a 10%, \$320,845 increase (total funding \$3.53 million, \$3,034,773 for the RPCs, \$494,527 for municipalities). Return to the Property Transfer Tax (PTT) formula over time.

Increase the State’s investment in Weatherization Programs for low-income and vulnerable Vermonters. At least \$12 million is needed to maintain capacity and help meet the State’s energy plan goals.

Increase the State subsidy for LIHEAP Fuel Assistance to meet an average of at least 33% of annual household need, the FY 2012 level of assistance.

Ensure access to emergency heating services through Crisis Fuel Assistance.

ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

To make work pay and help reduce caseloads, eliminate asset tests and increasing earned income disregards in the Reach Up program. Increase benefit amounts by increasing the “ratable reduction,” which has been under 50% for years. Reduce case loads and help families get off Reach Up by continuing to increase the number of case managers.

Increase funding for Vermont’s five regional Micro-Business Development Programs (MPDPs).

Increase funding for Individual Development Accounts (IDAs) and Matched Savings Programs.

Maintain the State Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC).

Protect full access to affordable health care options for low-income Vermonters.

TAX POLICY

Support fairer budget and tax policies that recognize the basic human rights and needs of low-income families, the elderly, people with disabilities and the most vulnerable among us. Support efforts to raise new revenues to pay for the basic needs of low income and vulnerable Vermonters. Adjust Vermont’s tax structure to meet the twin imperatives of increasing revenues sustainably and properly apportioning those revenues based on ability to pay.

Maintain investments in tax credits that support affordable housing, including the Vermont Affordable Housing, Charitable Housing, Historic Buildings, Façade Improvement, and Mobile Home Sale Credits. Support the Administration’s request for a \$500,000 increase to the Downtown Tax Credit.

Preserve property tax income sensitivity for low- and moderate income tenants and maintain the Renter’s Rebate at the current formula level.

Raise sufficient new revenue to increase State Thermal Efficiency investments necessary to meet the State energy plan goal of improving the energy efficiency of 80,000 housing units by the year 2020.

LEGISLATION

Support legislation to strengthen fair property tax assessment for shared equity homes. Limited appreciation homeowners should be taxed at the level for which they can sell their homes and not the unrestricted market value, as if there was no land lease or housing subsidy covenant.

Support Growth Center reform legislation and additional incentives for development in Designated Downtowns, Growth Centers, Village Centers and Neighborhood Development Areas.

Support the Water and Sewer Shut-Off Bill (S.41), as passed by the Senate, to allow tenants to establish service for a rental dwelling if the landlord is delinquent in paying for the service

Support a Homeless Bill Of Rights in concept. Patterned after Rhode Island law, H.493 establishes an equal right to jobs, housing, services, schools, and public space for all inhabitants, whether they have a home or not.

Increase children’s health and safety by enacting measures to increase compliance with the State’s Rental Housing Health and Safety Code.

Support legislation that allows unhindered replacement of mobile homes that are old, energy inefficient and/or damaged with modular housing and that eases the condemnation process after a natural disaster.

Monitor proposals to secure regulatory relief for affordable housing development.

Support working Vermonters and their families by enacting paid sick and safe day legislation (H.208).