

CHAMPLAIN HOUSING TRUST



To: Senator Claire Ayer, Chair and the Senate Health and Welfare Committee
From: Brenda Torpy, CEO
Date: February 20, 2013
Re: CHT/HowardCenter partnership to provide transitional and permanent housing to people with mental health disabilities

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this important component of CHT's overall affordable housing mission and to highlight the importance of the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board funding in making these housing options possible. I would also like to thank Elaine Soto of the HowardCenter who has joined me in this testimony and all her colleagues at Howard who work so effectively with our staff to help their clients access and succeed in making a home with CHT.

Below you will find a synopsis of each of the properties (program, staffing and ownership/management structures) in our portfolio serving Howard clients. In addition to the 77 people housed in these at any given time, we also have 95 residents renting affordable apartments in CHT's conventional rentals who receive services from Howard. We rely on the HowardCenter to refer clients who are ready and able to live independently and to provide ongoing case management for them as needed. Our social worker and our property managers have the expertise to engage case managers as need and to be supportive of these tenants with special needs.

The nine purpose-built homes that serve people who need various levels of on-site services from the Howard Center all received funding from the VHCB. In fact VHCB was almost always the first money in and these state funds leveraged significant federal capital subsidies, as well as long-term rental subsidies that we need to compete for nationally. Without the state investment we would not be able to bring these very essential and oversubscribed program funds to Vermont.

VHCB has also nurtured this twenty-plus year partnership by investing in CHT's organizational capacity. It is this capacity that has allowed us to respond to Howard Center when they have had an immediate need as they did when people were being displaced from the sale of the Catholic Diocese property in Burlington to Burlington College, and when they came to us with a new initiative to create apartments for people who could live independently but need onsite support to prevent recurring hospitalization. We've just

purchased a property on Pearl Street in Essex. The capacity building by VHCB has also helped CHT to build strong local community support which has been crucial to achieving local acceptance of the programmed properties in our neighborhoods.

As you read through our project summary you will see that the buildings range from transitional housing options with substantial staffing, to shelters and rooming-house style permanent housing with on-site staffing at various levels depending on need. Many of the renters in our larger portfolio have 'graduated' from these homes, and if they find themselves in difficulty on their own, HowardCenter can move them back to one of the homes with hands-on services. In the aggregate our partnership has created a social safety net for this very fragile population that is highly at-risk, not only for homelessness, but for hospital emergency services, and even jail.

Together we provide shelter, the first steps out of that, community settings and permanent independent and affordable housing. Moreover, this population is very low-income and we are able to reserve apartments at this deep affordability thanks to VHCB funding as well as the subsidies leveraged. You will also note in the descriptions that HowardCenter and CHT have been flexible in adapting and adjusting services levels at properties as the population changes. Both of our agencies share a deep commitment to providing affordability, stability, security and dignity to this population and CHT's ability to meet this need at this level depends upon VHCB's project and capacity funding. Please support the Governor's recommendation for VHCB funding this year.

Thank you again for the opportunity to tell you our story.

Champlain Housing Trust Collaborations with HowardCenter

- 1. Safe Haven (133 King Street, Burlington).** This project serves 6 guests of the HowardCenter who are homeless and not able to manage in the Waystation Shelter. The purpose of this shelter is to provide a safe environment while matching guests with appropriate support services in the community. While some guests stay a few days, others stay several months until their situation is stable. The shelter offers 24/7 staffing. This building is master leased to HowardCenter.
- 2. Safe Haven Apartments (133 King Street, Burlington).** Two apartments attached to the Safe Haven shelter provide housing to HowardCenter clients who are able to access some additional support services from the Safe Haven staff. CHT manages the two units.
- 3. Branches (222 North Street, Burlington).** This is a 6 unit transitional housing program. Clients may live at Branches up to 2 years, and receive both on site support services and case management support. The building is staffed several hours per day. This building is master leased to HowardCenter, but CHT handles the leasing.

4. **Shelter Plus Care (20 South Willard Street, Burlington).** This is a 6 unit SRO providing permanent housing and support services to clients chosen by HowardCenter. Services are available on site several hours per week. Shelter Plus Care is part of our Housing for Homeless SRO's and is not master leased to HowardCenter.
5. **114 Archibald Street, Burlington.** This property provides 9 units of housing. Originally the building was used to house Shelter Plus Care clients, and does continue to serve some of HowardCenter's more difficult clients (those who have multiple barriers to succeed in housing). More than half of the clients have a Section 8 voucher. There is no on site HowardCenter support, but case managers work closely with CHT and each other to support all residents.
6. **Allen House, Winooski.** The Allen House provides rooms for 25 residents. Of the current resident roster, 22 of the residents are HowardCenter CRT clients. CHT provides a night manager for the building. HowardCenter staffs the building 7 days a week (about 10 hours a day Monday to Friday, and perhaps 4 hours per day on Saturdays and Sundays). When we first approached HowardCenter with a concern about the need for staffing, they provided CHT with \$30000 per year for weekday hours' staffing. In addition HowardCenter began staffing a 4 hour evening position and later a weekend position. Eventually we decided that all staffing should be handled by HowardCenter which provides a level of clinical oversight that CHT is not equipped to provide. CHT currently handles leasing, lease violations, and other property management functions including maintenance.
7. **South End Community Housing (336 St. Paul Street, Burlington).** This is a 5 unit HUD 811 property with on site HowardCenter support services. HowardCenter also pays the rent for a night manager unit on site.
8. **Lakeview Community Care Home (322 St. Paul Street, Burlington).** This property provides 16 units of housing to some of the most vulnerable clients served by the HowardCenter CRT program. The building is master leased to HowardCenter. CHT developed this building to response to their displacement from their prior location and made it a priority for completion to meet their deadline.
9. **Pearl Street, Essex Junction.** This building is part of a new program utilizing state funding to provide housing and support services to 5 HowardCenter clients who require significant support to live in the community. These residents cannot live independently in our apartments but also do not manage well in community living (rooms with shared common space). Here they have their own apartments and the level of casework support and presence that they need to succeed.
10. **Other.** We house 95 HowardCenter clients in our apartments right now and we do have capacity to accept more as we have vacancies and if they are referred and supported by Howard. I also give some preference to their clients when there are vacancies at Sarah Cole House or 204 Pearl Street.