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Vermont Housing & Conservation Board  
Testimony before the Vermont Child Poverty Council  
Roadmap to End Homelessness  
October 20<sup>th</sup>, 2016

Good Morning. I'm Jen Hollar, Policy Director for the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board. VHCB funds affordable housing projects as well as the regional nonprofit organizations that develop, own and manage them. Together, we provide the rental housing that is one ingredient of the three part remedy Angus described. Combating homelessness is our top housing priority.

- In the last 12 months, 275 homeless families and individuals have been housed by our regional partners - groups like the Twin Pines Housing Trust, Champlain Housing Trust, Downstreet Housing and the Addison County Community Trust.
- Fund shelter and homes for the homeless like Harbor Place in Shelburne, Beacon Apartments in South Burlington and above the COTS day station. Others are in development in Rutland and Windham counties.
- Targeting the new National Housing Trust Fund program to housing with services that serve extremely low income Vermonters.
- Vermont is the best in the nation at serving the very poor – those vulnerable to homelessness. 58% of low income housing tax credit units are home to households with incomes below 30% of county median. The national average is 8%.

VHCB also works closely with AHS, the Department of Housing and Community Development and other funding agencies at the policy level to coordinate and tackle barriers to our work. In that context, I serve with Angus to co-chair as steering committee that is overseeing the development of a Roadmap to End Homelessness.

The downward trend in the official homelessness count shows that focused resources and coordinated effort works. The Administration and Legislature's support has made these gains possible. But progress is uneven across the state and more needs to be done. Where vacancy rates are low and there are long waiting lists for affordable apartments, housing the homeless first is the right thing to do but means others must wait – sometimes in very precarious or even dangerous situations.

The FY17 Budget Bill included \$40,000 for an assessment of the state's current systems and resources, development of a Roadmap for Ending Homelessness and report to the Legislature with recommendations for moving forward.

We obtained commitments for an additional \$45,000 and the Roadmap project was underway by the end of May. An outline of the project follows and I'll take a few minutes to explain where we are and hope that you will consider its recommendations when they come in December.

## **Roadmap Project Outline**

### **Accelerating Vermont's Effort to End Homelessness**

- Goal:** Reduce homelessness and stabilize vulnerable populations.
- Purpose:** Build on existing efforts to end homelessness by developing a statewide system for facilitating a range of service-connected affordable housing options (including permanent supportive housing), building local capacity, determining cost and available and needed resources.
- Funding:** \$85,000  
Agency of Human Services (General Fund Appropriation - \$40,000), Sustainable Future Fund of the Vermont Community Foundation (\$25,000), NeighborWorks Alliance of Vermont (\$10,000), Vermont Housing & Conservation Board (\$5,000), Vermont Housing Finance Agency (\$5,000)
- Consultant:** Corporation for Supportive Housing – A technical assistance provider experienced in developing supportive housing and guiding cities and states in the creation of successful models.
- Timeline:** Steering Committee Established – May  
Scope of Work Created and RFP Issued – June  
Selected Corporation for Supportive Housing – July  
Assessment of Existing Systems and Resources – July to October  
CSH Preliminary Assessment Submitted - August 31, 2016  
Roadmap Development – September to October  
Draft Roadmap Due – October 31, 2016  
Present Recommendations and Roadmap – November  
Training and Technical Assistance – Fall and Early Winter  
Final Report including Assessment, Roadmap and Cost Analysis Due - December 1, 2016
- Steering Committee:** Vermont Agency of Human Services  
Vermont Housing & Conservation Board  
Vermont Housing Finance Agency  
NeighborWorks Alliance of Vermont  
Vermont State Housing Authority  
Chittenden County Continuum of Care  
Balance of State Continuum of Care  
Vermont Department of Housing and Community Development  
Upper Valley Haven  
Rutland Housing Authority  
Vermont Affordable Housing Coalition  
Vermont Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence
- Deliverables:** 1. Assessment of existing resources and systems for the purpose of identifying the barriers local housing developers and service providers face in creating supportive housing or other housing options identified as necessary to reduce homelessness. Qualitative and quantitative analysis. Stakeholder input through facilitated group meetings, online survey, Steering Committee input and interviews.

2. Comprehensive and actionable roadmap for creating systemic approach to making services, rental subsidies and housing units available for supportive housing to encourage and facilitate local projects that are targeted to ending homelessness. Based on the assessment above, recommendations to be specific and measurable and include benchmarks and implementation strategies. Roadmap should refine, align and build on existing efforts including Vermont's Plan to End Homelessness and the Framework for Ending Family Homelessness by 2020.

3. Cost Analysis of proposed solutions. Based on an analysis of existing homeless and housing expenditures, what additional strategic investments are recommended? Where are the gaps? Are additional resources (housing, services, and subsidies) necessary to end homelessness? Can existing resources be maximized, streamlined and targeted to meet the need? To include recommendations for greater cost efficiencies, effectiveness and better outcomes. Consider different populations and needs. Include an analysis of how state expenditures related to homelessness and supportive housing for the chronically homeless avoid costs in healthcare, mental health, corrections, general assistance. Review will be based on existing state and national data and studies. What additional Vermont analysis is needed?

4. Technical Assistance and Capacity. To build local understanding of and capacity to implement the roadmap, including developing affordable supportive housing and sustaining tenant engagement and success. Provide training in best practices for housing and service provider collaboration and strong partnerships. Four trainings – 2 in Fall and 2 in January.

## **Sec. B.1102 FISCAL YEAR 2017 Appropriations Bill – Homelessness Study and Report**

(a) The sum of \$40,000 is appropriated to the Agency of Human Services, Secretary's Office for a homelessness study, comprehensive and actionable roadmap to reduce homelessness, technical assistance to state agencies and community housing and homeless service providers, and training on best practices for housing and human services collaboration. This appropriation represents funding for partial cost of this work and the remaining funding shall be provided by partner organizations.

(1) In partnership with the partner organizations, the Secretary shall contract with a nationally recognized organization with expertise in analyzing homelessness expenditures to conduct a comprehensive analysis of current State expenditures on homelessness. The analysis shall also examine savings in other program expenditures resulting from the provision of homelessness services, including savings in health care expenditures. The analysis shall also include a comprehensive plan for substantially reducing homelessness in Vermont, including necessary strategic investments and concrete recommendations for implementation with benchmarks to measure progress. The contractor shall further provide technical assistance to state agencies and community housing and homeless service providers in implementing the roadmap to reduce homelessness. The technical assistance shall include training on best practices for housing and human services collaboration.

(2) On or before January 15, 2017, the Commissioner shall submit this report and recommendations to the House Committees on Appropriations, on Health Care, on Housing, General and Military Affairs, and on Human Services and the Senate Committees on Appropriations, Health and Welfare, and Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs.