

Testimony to House Appropriations Committee

Public Hearing on the Governor's Recommended FY 2018 Budget Adjustments

Richard M. Williams, Executive Director

Vermont State Housing Authority

January 10, 2018

My name is Richard M. Williams and I am the Executive Director of the Vermont State Housing Authority (VSHA). The VSHA, a Quasi State Agency was created in 1968 by the Legislature for the purpose for the purpose of administering federal rental assistance programs. No state funds are directly appropriated to VSHA.

I am here today to support the proposed \$871,000 increase to Emergency Housing, which DCF has recommended in the Budget Adjustment Act over its original FY 18 budget request, but not at the expense of the Vermont Rental Subsidy Program by paying for it in part with a \$200,000 reduction to that program.

VSHA administers 3,659 Housing Choice Vouchers, the state's largest federal Section 8 Housing Voucher Program at a cost to the US Dept. of Housing and Urban Development of \$27 million dollars.

VERMONT RENTAL SUBSIDY

The Vermont Rental Subsidy program (VRSP) is a local solution to homelessness which provides state-funded rental assistance to formerly-homeless families and individuals whose monthly income would otherwise be insufficient to afford the cost of renting in their communities. Rental assistance funds are administered by the Vermont Agency of Human Services (AHS). VSHA contracts with the AHS Department of Children and Families, to provide housing inspections for units receiving state rental assistance

In addition, the VSHA created several transitional Housing Preferences, but one is specifically for The Vermont Rental Subsidy Program. When the VSHA wait list is open applications will be accepted after 9 months of participation in VRS

Between 7/1/2016-12/31/1737 families have been admitted with the transitional housing VRS preference

7/1/16 -6/30/2017 21 Families

7/1/16- 12/31/17 16 Families

VSHA Family Unification Program (FUP)

VSHA has administered this program since 1999. The Family Unification program (FUP), a Federal HUD program under which Housing Choice Vouchers are provided to two different populations:

1. Families for whom the lack of adequate housing is a primary factor in:
 - a. The imminent placement of the family's child or children in out-of-home care, or
 - b. The delay in the discharge of the child or children to the family from out-of-home care.

There is no time limitation on FUP family vouchers.

2. **(NEW)** For a period not to exceed 36 months, otherwise eligible youths who have attained at least 18 years and not more than 24 years of age and who have left foster care, or will leave foster care within 90 days, in accordance with a transition plan described in section 475(5) (H) of the Social Security Act, and is homeless or is at risk of becoming homeless at age 16 or older.

VSHA administers the FUP program in partnership with the Vermont Agency of Human Services (Child Welfare Agency, DCF) who are responsible for referring FUP families and youths to the VSHA for determination of eligibility for rental

assistance. Once DCF makes the referral the VSHA places the FUP applicant on its waiting list, determines whether the family or youth meets HCV program eligibility requirements, and conducts all other processes relating to voucher issuance and administration.

In addition to rental assistance, supportive services must be provided by DCF to FUP youths for the entire 18 months in which the youth participates in the program; examples of the skills targeted by these services include money management skills, job preparation, educational counseling, and proper nutrition and meal preparation.

VSHA's Family Unification program has a baseline of 300 vouchers for rental assistance, currently 286 families are leased

During the period of 7/1/16 – 12/31/2017 64 families received FUP vouchers.

7/1/16-6/30/2017 28 FUPS leased

7/1/17 – 12/31/17 36 FUPS leased

I close my remarks in opposition of the \$200,000 reduction in the DCF VRSP appropriation. I believe it is a better use of state funds to support families for a longer period of time versus temporary motel options. \$200,000 appropriation would support an additional 27 households for a one year period, and help reduce the pressure on shelters, get folks off the street or out of their cars.

I hope that this is not a reflection on what to expect in the new baseline amount in the FY 2019 budget.