



VERMONT HOUSING and CONSERVATION COALITION

February 13, 2018

Madam Chair and the Members of the House Appropriations Committee,

We are writing on behalf of the 50-member Vermont Housing and Conservation Coalition and the tens of thousands of Vermonters these organizations serve to ask you to supplement the Governor's FY 2019 request for \$15.35 million for the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board. Specifically, we ask that you work toward meeting the long-established statutory requirement for VHCB funding of one-half of the annual revenues from the Property Transfer Tax. For FY19, this would be approximately \$20.5 million.

With your support and leadership last session, the effort to secure a \$37 million housing bond was successful. This is already proving to be a transformational investment to meet critical needs. However, there is more urgent work to be done in both the housing and conservation sectors, and VHCB faces an ongoing shortfall in funding relative to the identified need of time-sensitive projects.

Increasing VHCB funding to the full statutory share of the Property Transfer Tax is the next step in addressing this challenge. We acknowledge that it may take more than one year to get there, but it is important to begin the process of closing the gap between VHCB's statutory share and the budgeted amount—which would be an additional \$5 million in FY 2019 based on the Governor's request—to better respond to the pipeline of pressing community conservation and housing projects statewide.

The administration's total for VHCB in the FY19 appropriations and capital bill proposals is level with last year. The total is \$15.35 million and reflects a \$1.5 million reduction for debt service on last year's housing revenue bond. The breakdown:

- \$9.8 million in property transfer tax revenue in the FY 19 Appropriations Bill
- \$2.75 million in Capital Bill funding for water quality and other conservation projects
- \$1.0 million in Capital Bill funding for water quality grants to farmers
- \$1.8 million in Capital Bill funding for housing

Past investments in VHCB continue to serve Vermonters in more than 200 communities. In this era when accountability and measurable results are increasingly important in guiding future investments, we can confidently point to a record of accomplishments. Over the past 30 years VHCB has invested \$322 million in loans and grants to more than 200 different communities, created affordable homes for 32,000 Vermonters, and conserved 701 active farms, nearly 267,000 additional acres of significant recreational lands and natural areas, and 69 historic properties for community use.

Over time, strategic VHCB investments, leveraged by \$1.5 billion in federal and private funds, have improved the economic vitality of Vermont communities and downtowns, municipal and non-profit delivery systems, working lands, and Main Street businesses. They are working to improve water quality, support our forest economy, meet the State's climate and energy goals and enhance services and opportunities for vulnerable individuals and families.

With your help VHCB has accomplished much, but much remains to be done. Your support of a FY 2019 VHCB appropriation that moves toward bridging the gap to the full statutory requirement of one-half of Property Transfer Tax revenues (\$20.5 million) is critical.

Thank you for your past leadership and strong support of VHCB. Please let us know if you would like additional information.

Sincerely,

Elise Annes, Vermont Land Trust
Chris Donnelly, Champlain Housing Trust
Phil Huffman, The Nature Conservancy in Vermont
Kenn Sassorossi, Housing Vermont