

Testimony – Senate Economic Development, Housing & Gen. Affairs – 2017 – Jan. 18
Roadmap Report – Angus Chaney, Housing Director, Agency of Human Services

Good Morning. My name is Angus Chaney. I serve as Director of Housing for the State of Vermont's Agency of Human Services and chair Vermont's Council on Homelessness.

The Agency of Human Services strives to improve the health and wellbeing of Vermonters today and tomorrow and to protect those among us who are unable to protect themselves. The highest priority AHS housing effort is ending homelessness in Vermont.

Act 172, Section B.1102(a) charged AHS to contract with a nationally-recognized organization to provide an independent and comprehensive study of Vermont's homeless system of care and an actionable roadmap to substantially reduce homelessness in Vermont.

\$40,000 was appropriated by the Vermont Legislature for this study. Local organizations committed an additional \$45,000. AHS collaborated with the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board (VHCB) to form a steering committee of funding organizations and partners representing various housing and homeless services organizations to release a request for proposals in the summer of 2016. The Corporation for Supportive Housing was ultimately selected for the project.

The resulting "*Vermont Roadmap to End Homelessness*" highlights effective and promising practices – such as Vermont's investments in supportive housing, targeted rental assistance, and Coordinated Assessment – which have already helped drive significant reductions in homelessness in Vermont in the past two years. It also cites and quantifies a serious unmet housing need, and estimates the type, scale and cost of housing investments needed over the next five years to end homelessness.

The report indicates that the public investment needed to end homelessness is significant. As with any entrenched social issue, ending homelessness requires a whole community approach. AHS, alone, will not be able to solve the problem of homelessness. As with our ambitious goal of ending child and family homelessness by 2020, there are major roles for public, private and non-profit sector partners as well as multiple state agencies and the federal government.

At the outset, two of our primary concerns had been that the Roadmap Study – while led by a national organization - needed to be a *Vermont* report....

...and, simultaneously, Vermont did not need another document to duplicate or compete with existing plans which are proving successful.

Both concerns were allayed over the course of the project.

A Vermont Report

The contractor informed this report with local surveys, review of key Vermont documents, reports, and data. These data, modeling and assumptions were regularly tested by the steering committee, and the report was further strengthened with interviews and facilitated stakeholder discussions. Understanding that needs and resources vary by community, our committee worked to ensure regional balance in the research.

Avoiding Duplication with Existing State Plans and Frameworks

Vermont has many state plans: The Consolidated Plan filed with HUD; The Plan to End Homelessness, developed by the Vermont Council on Homelessness. Add to this, strategic frameworks such as the Ending Family Homelessness 2020 initiative. To mitigate duplication, the Vermont Council on Homelessness was involved with the development of the roadmap, hosting the largest of the facilitated stakeholder discussions at a council meeting in August. The Roadmap falls squarely within strategy one of Vermont’s State Plan to End Homelessness:

1. Increase the number of units affordable to people who are extremely low-income, especially those who are homeless.

> Set goals for a multi-year housing strategy to increase housing for people who are homeless.

- Vermont’s Plan to End Homelessness

While existing documents articulate how the state will commit federal housing dollars -- or prioritize and coordinate existing programs and strategies -- the Roadmap provides a financial analysis of unmet housing and service needs and a multi-year production strategy to address the shortage of housing affordable to Vermonters experiencing homelessness.

At this time, I want to introduce Jennifer Hollar with the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board, and Larry Oaks with the Corporation for Supportive Housing who will provide more detail on the Roadmap project and go through the specific findings and recommendations.