



Roadmap to End Homelessness

Testimony before the

Senate Committee on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs

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Vermont Housing & Conservation Board

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Good morning and thank you for the opportunity to speak to you on this important topic. My name is Jen Hollar and I am the Policy Director for the Vermont Housing & Conservation Board.

VHCB is a public body established by the Legislature in 1987 for the purpose of creating affordable housing for Vermonters, and conserving and protecting the state's agricultural land, forests, important recreational and natural areas as well as historic properties.

With a state appropriation, we make grants and loans that leverage federal and private funds for the development of housing affordable to lower income households including those experiencing homelessness. Recent examples include Harbor Place in Shelburne, Beacon Apartments in South Burlington, project planning funds in Rutland and we are now reviewing an application for a project in Brattleboro. At another time, we would welcome the opportunity to describe all of VHCB's housing and conservation programs more fully, particularly those that support Vermont's rural economy.

Fighting homelessness is also a policy priority which is what led to our involvement in the Roadmap effort. The funding provided by the Legislature created a unique and exciting opportunity to bring in some national expertise to assess the state's approach to fighting homelessness and how it can best build on existing strategies. To help set the context for the Corporation for Supportive Housing's presentation, I'll briefly describe the process through which the report was developed.

Roadmap Project Outline

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 national technical assistance provider experienced in supportive housing and guiding cities and states in the creation of successful systems for ending homelessness.

Timeline: Steering Committee Established – May
Scope of Work Created and RFP Issued – June
Corporation for Supportive Housing Selected – July
Assessment of Existing Systems and Resources – July to October
CSH Preliminary Assessment Submitted - August
Roadmap Development – September to October
Recommendations and Roadmap Presented to Steering Committee – November
Training and Technical Assistance – January and February
CSH Final Report (Assessment, Roadmap, Cost Analysis) Submitted - December
Agency of Human Services Delivered to Legislature – December 31, 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

Project Elements:

1. Assessment of existing resources and systems for the purpose of identifying the barriers to reducing homelessness. Qualitative and quantitative analysis. CSH engaged in a series of exercises over a three month period which included in-depth interviews with key stakeholders involved in the effort to address homelessness across the state; a group meeting on August 18th in Waterbury with 50 non-profit leaders, government officials, advocates and funders; a second group meeting on September 30th in Burlington involving twelve individuals experiencing homelessness; the distribution, collection and analysis of 338 written surveys which were provided to stakeholders across the state; and discussions with members of the Steering Committee. During this same period more than 50 separate reports, plans and source documents related to homelessness systems, agencies, and activities in Vermont were provided to CSH via the Steering Committee. The assessment section of CSH's report captures themes from both the qualitative and quantitative data reviewed.



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. Through the assessment above, CSH determined that Vermont is on the leading edge of the fight to end homelessness – the number of homeless has declined by 30% in the last two year. But challenges remain – a lack of access to affordable housing, transportation, supportive services, continued reliance on motels and not yet complete coordination of data and services. CSH recommends a five-year effort and laid out a roadmap to expand supportive housing, meet targets for new affordable rental housing, complete local coordination systems, retain service and rental assistance programs that are working well while continuing to innovate.

3. Cost Analysis of proposed solutions. CSH conducted financial modeling to estimate costs of implementation of the roadmap. It also reviewed cost avoidance research and data available in Vermont and nationally. The report includes a discussion of the “cost avoidance strategies which have the potential to save state resources and improve outcomes for vulnerable individuals and families with complex needs. “

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, CSH is providing training in best practices for housing and service provider collaboration and strong partnerships. Trainings in *Housing Stability and Eviction Prevention* and *Best Practices in Supportive Housing*.