

Testimony: Senate Health and Welfare  
2018

March 22,

RE: Housing

Good morning. My name is Mary Moulton and I'm the Executive Director at Washington County Mental Health Services.

Earlier this session I testified on the mental health system and efforts we are making at WCMHS to reduce use of the emergency room and in patient hospitalization. While developing a robust mobile crisis approach and reducing by 20% emergency room utilization for mental health crisis over the last two quarters, we fully recognize that housing is key to helping people maintain stability in their lives. To that end, WCMHS has participated, advocated, and advanced housing options in our region for 50 years. We have learned that people need different types of supports during different times of their lives. This is why we provide a spectrum of housing from 24/7 in-home supports, to intensive case management supports or light supports for those living more independently. We currently facilitate, through existing infrastructure at WCMHS, the shelter plus care vouchers available in our community and are active participants in the Coordinated Point of Entry model. WCMHS provides 122 units of housing between group homes and independent living opportunities with both clinical and peer oversight, including a peer crisis bed. Our crisis beds alone divert over 100 people from hospital stays every year.

In 2018, as our belts tighten and housing needs increase, we need that spectrum of low to high supports more than ever. We've always appreciated good community partnerships and are building new relationships that will help meet our community goals and maintain and grow time-tested successful stabilization and housing options. As you receive requests for greater housing dollars, an undoubtedly needed resource, I hope there will be flexibility in appropriating funding to organizations such as ours, which have existing strong infrastructures to support those receiving housing vouchers.

So without further adieu, I will hand the reins over first to Scott Acus, Executive Director of Second Spring - a collaborative of HowardCenter, Clara Martin Center and Washington County Mental Health Services.

We'll then hear from Brooke Jenkins, Executive Director of the Good Samaritan Shelter and Eileen Peltier, Executive Director of Downstreet Housing and Community Development.

Thank you!