

From: Jan Demers <jdemers@cvoeo.org>

Sent: Sunday, February 16, 2020 1:48 PM

Subject: RE: GA Homeless Housing

For the State to stop General Assistance Emergency Housing through the use of hotel rooms is unnerving and frightening. Yet to find solutions in local regions with a tether to the Office of Economic Opportunity would seem to be the right way to go. Providing hotel rooms for the homeless, disabled, those fleeing domestic violence in the end is an expensive and fleeting solution. It doesn't get anyone closer to being housed (as you know well) and is further isolating.

The dangerous part of this is the time table. We are being told that we need to designate a housing provider or lead agency to take over the work of placing people in hotels for the next year (this would be a transition year) by March 9th and that funding would be transferred to the regional entities by July 1, 2020. From many perspectives, mine included, this is a trajectory of failure. We need to make new rules for eligibility, we need to hire and train new staff, we need to find new facilities. All this without nearly enough time to meet with those who will be affected the most (those we serve) and without the time for properly planning and implementing changes. This will take time, training and making new arrangements.

It has been suggested, and I completely agree, that we need more planning and implementation time. We need one year of planning, one year for transition and to start the third year for implementation. In other words, we need one more year before this change begins. Here in Chittenden County there are resources and collaborators that are already working to end homelessness. I do believe we can find success but not without the time to make this happen well. The other grave concern is that there will be enough funding from the state to make this work. It didn't work at the state level I'm not sure how local solutions would be able to finance this in a better way.

The one certainty is that we need more time. Very much uncertain is that there are resources to make this happen.

Thank you for listening. Please let me know how I can be of service.

Jan

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