



## **VERMONT HOUSING and CONSERVATION COALITION**

February 15, 2019

Dear Chair Sheldon and House Natural Resources, Fish and Wildlife Committee members,

As you prepare your policy budget letters to the House Appropriations Committee, we urge your committee to include language that **supports VHCB at its complete statutory share of the Property Transfer Tax (PTT), which for FY'20, is \$21.8M.**

The Governor's proposed budget has cut available resources by \$2.5M to \$14.4M.

And recent use of "notwithstanding language" has underfunded these proven strategies by over \$50M. We urge an end to this practice, which at a time when there are one-time surpluses does not make sense.

PTT revenues are at record high levels. This means real estate pressures are up. This recent rise in the real estate market has placed immense pressure on the affordability of housing, is accelerating development of Vermont's priceless landscape, and threatens irreversible loss of rural economies.

Across Vermont, there is a strong pipeline of community driven projects ready to go. These are investment opportunities that create safe, decent housing, boost the recreation and local food economies, save special places, and help clean water all across the state.

Unless the course is reset, *VHCB will now be operating at a really bare minimum level.*

Unlike most state expenditures, VHCB dollars will benefit multiple generations of taxpayers; and few other state efforts can simultaneously benefit and make progress on so many public key policy goals including:

### **PERMANENTLY AFFORDABLE HOUSING INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES:**

- Build more workforce housing for people whose wages don't cover day-to-day bills,
- Save state money by reducing the costs of homelessness and slowing the growth in health care expenditures,
- Provide safe, decent housing that is service-enriched for older adults (ex. Support and Services at Home), vulnerable Vermonters, people with disabilities, people in recovery from addiction, and criminal justice offenders in transition,
- Preserve existing assisted housing at-risk of losing its affordability,

- Boost construction jobs and strengthen the economy, and
- Maximize available federal matching funds.

**CONSERVATION:**

- Boost rural community economies,
- Improve water quality and flood resilience,
- Grow public access to trails, shoreline, and dispersed recreation such as hunting or fishing,
- Create more Town Forests to benefit local communities,
- Protect gathering places like sledding hills, town greens, and parks,
- Protect farms and make sure they are affordable for the next generation, and
- Conserve wildlife habitat and irreplaceable natural areas.

And unlike many state investments, every VHCB dollar invested in such projects will attract significant leverage of about \$4 from other sources.

Please let HAC know that your committee supports affordable housing for the most vulnerable of Vermonters, investing in Vermont's working and natural landscape, and celebrating Vermont's historic downtowns and village centers through VHCB in a manner that supports our economy and our quality of life.

**To achieve these goals, we again urge you to fund VHCB at its complete statutory level in FY'20 of \$21.8 million.**

Sincerely,

Co-chairs of Vermont Housing and Conservation Coalition

Phil Huffman, The Nature Conservancy

Elise Annes, Vermont Land Trust

Chris Donnelly, Champlain Housing Trust

Molly Dugan, Cathedral Square