

From: Richard Williams
Sent: Wednesday, May 5, 2021 5:03 PM
To: Tom Stevens <tom@stevensvermont.com>
Subject: [External] Statement for Testimony

Dear Chairman Stevens,

First our apology for not being present in person to testify before your committee as you requested.

I'm responding to your invitation to submit testimony from members of the Housing Recovery Working Group.

Specifically, you requested a discussion on the policy recommendations contained in the April 30 letter to the House and Senate Appropriations Committees from the Housing Recovery Working Group.

I am responding to references in the letter pertaining to the Vermont State Housing Authority (VSHA).

The VSHA recently received notification, that our FY 2021 Calendar Year funding for the Federal, Dept of Housing and Urban Development, Housing Choice Voucher program was fully funded, for the first time in years, and included a 4.4% inflation factor resulting in increased budget authority for 2021. The increased budget authority, equates to approximately 500 new vouchers that must be leased by 12/31/2021.

In addition, under American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding: VSHA anticipates the publishing of Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) for:

- Emergency Housing Vouchers. These vouchers will be allocated to Public Housing Authorities (PHA's), and will sunset after 2 years.
 - PHA's can opt-not to receive funding
 - Targeted to PHA's serving rural communities

Consolidated Appropriations Act for 2021:

- permanent housing vouchers that will be targeted to homeless families. These vouchers will be made available to PHA's by invitation from HUD
- family unification vouchers, available by competition

The challenge to using the abundance of rental assistance is the lack the housing stock combined with rising rents, even during this pandemic, but predominately in the Addison/Chittenden/Franklin County areas of the Vermont.

In addition, VSHA received \$110 million from State of Vermont's share of the \$200 million dollars received under the Consolidated Appropriations /Emergency Rental Assistance Act of 2021, signed into law on December 27, 2020.

The State of Vermont this week has received notice of \$152 million under ARPA for additional monies to assist renters. At this time no breakdown of allocation of funds has been provided to the VSHA.

In conclusion there are sufficient amounts of monies available for temporary rental assistance for households under 80% of the area medium income, but what Vermont is lacking is actual permanent housing vouchers and affordable housing units either through production or rehabilitation by private/non profit developers, for those voucher holders to lease a home. I would encourage this committee to appropriate monies available now before the Legislature adjourns for the session. This is the time to spend/reserve these funds now not defer until the Budget Adjustment Act next year. In my 47 years of working for the VSHA, I have never seen such a resource and the priority for affordable housing not only for Vermonters but our Nation.

Thank you,

Regards,
Richard

Richard M. Williams
My Personal Pronouns (he,him,his)
Executive Director
Vermont State Housing Authority

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