

1 H.814

2 Introduced by Representatives Cina of Burlington, Cole of Hartford, Headrick
3 of Burlington, Logan of Burlington, Priestley of Bradford, and
4 Sammis of Castleton

5 Referred to Committee on

6 Date:

7 Subject: Mental health; housing; community reentry after incarceration

8 Statement of purpose of bill as introduced: This bill proposes to provide grant
9 funds for community-based services that provide supportive and transitional
10 housing to individuals who are homeless or at risk of homelessness and who
11 are justice-involved.

12 An act relating to supportive and transitional housing for justice-involved
13 individuals

14 It is hereby enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont:

15 Sec. 1. FINDINGS

16 The General Assembly finds that:

17 (1) the lack of affordable housing is one of the reasons that justice-
18 involved individuals are incarcerated past their minimum sentencing dates in
19 Vermont;

1 (2) the lack of housing is one of several social determinants of health
2 and criminal behavior that could lead to greater recidivism and harm to public
3 health;

4 (3) safe housing has positive health impacts; and

5 (4) the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Office of
6 Health Policy recognizes the benefits of securing permanent supportive
7 housing through the Housing First model, which is an evidence-based program
8 utilized in Vermont through a partnership between the Agency of Human
9 Services and community-based partners.

10 Sec. 2. INTENT AND PURPOSE

11 (a) It is the intent of the General Assembly to promote transformative
12 justice and recovery by investing in housing and shelter for justice-involved
13 individuals simultaneously with support from community-based services.

14 (b) The purpose of this act is to:

15 (1) reinvest the appropriations of the State from incarceration into
16 community care by providing additional grant funds to community-based
17 services to provide supportive and transitional housing to individuals who are
18 justice-involved; and

19 (2) assess the current and projected needs for supportive and transitional
20 housing and community-based services in Vermont.

1 Sec. 3. APPROPRIATION; SUPPORTIVE AND TRANSITIONAL
2 HOUSING FOR JUSTICE-INVOLVED INDIVIDUALS; HOUSING
3 FIRST EXPANSION

4 In fiscal year 2025, \$1,313,044.00 is appropriated from the General Fund to
5 the Agency of Human Services to provide a grant to Pathways Vermont. This
6 grant shall augment the funds provided to Pathways Vermont in 2023 Acts and
7 Resolves No. 78, Sec. B.338.1. The grant provided pursuant to this section
8 shall be used to provide supportive and transitional housing to individuals who
9 are homeless or at risk of homelessness and who are being released from
10 incarceration or who were previously incarcerated. Pathways Vermont shall
11 use this grant to prioritize housing women and transgender, genderqueer, and
12 gender expansive individuals.

13 Sec. 4. APPROPRIATION; SUPPORTIVE AND TRANSITIONAL
14 HOUSING FOR JUSTICE-INVOLVED INDIVIDUALS; RISK
15 MITIGATION EXPANSION

16 In fiscal year 2025, \$500,000.00 is appropriated from the General Fund to
17 the Vermont State Housing Authority. This grant shall augment the funds
18 provided to the Vermont State Housing Authority for the Landlord Relief
19 Program in fiscal year 2024. The grant provided pursuant to this section shall
20 be used to provide supportive and transitional housing to individuals who are
21 homeless or at risk of homelessness and who are being released from

1 incarceration or were previously incarcerated. The Vermont State Housing
2 Authority shall use this grant to prioritize housing to women and transgender,
3 genderqueer, and gender expansive individuals.

4 Sec. 5. APPROPRIATION; SUPPORTIVE AND TRANSITIONAL
5 HOUSING FOR JUSTICE-INVOLVED INDIVIDUALS; LAND
6 ACCESS AND OPPORTUNITY

7 In fiscal year 2025, \$1,000,000.00 is appropriated from the General Fund to
8 the Land Access and Opportunity Board to provide grants to community-based
9 service providers for assistance with the purchase of real property for the
10 creation of supportive and transitional housing. The grants provided pursuant
11 to this section shall be used by community-based service providers to provide
12 supportive and transitional housing to individuals who are homeless or at risk
13 of homelessness and who are justice-involved. The Land Access and
14 Opportunity Board shall use these grants to prioritize housing for groups who
15 have been historically disadvantaged, including individuals who are Black,
16 Indigenous, or a Person of Color; individuals with disabilities; individuals who
17 are LGBTQ+; and women. These grants shall also prioritize the work of peer-
18 based services and organizations led by individuals with lived experience. The
19 grants shall prioritize the use of the Housing First model.

1 Sec. 6. REPORT; SUPPORTIVE AND TRANSITIONAL HOUSING

2 On or before January 15, 2025, the Agencies of Human Services and of
3 Commerce and Community Development shall jointly submit a written report
4 to the House Committees on General and Housing, on Health Care, and on
5 Human Services; to the Senate Committees on Economic Development,
6 Housing and General Affairs and on Health and Welfare; and to the Land
7 Access Opportunity Board regarding the current and future needs for
8 supportive and transitional housing in Vermont. The report shall recommend
9 strategies to:

10 (1) integrate supportive and transitional housing units into new housing
11 developments;

12 (2) incentivize the conversion of existing housing stock and other real
13 property into supportive and transitional housing;

14 (3) promote public-private partnerships that create supportive and
15 transitional housing;

16 (4) expand the use of peer-based services in supportive and transitional
17 housing;

18 (5) modify State housing plans, policies, and programs to promote
19 supportive and transitional housing; and

20 (6) identify State property that can be used for supportive and
21 transitional housing in partnership with community-based service providers.

1 Sec. 7. EFFECTIVE DATE

2 This act shall take effect on July 1, 2024.