

TO: Rep. Wood

DATE: February 22, 2023

FROM: Anne N. Sosin on behalf of the Vermont Affordable Housing Coalition (VAHC)

RE: FY24 Budget Proposal

February 17, 2023

Dear Chair Wood and members of the House Human Services Committee:

The Vermont Affordable Housing Coalition (VAHC) is a coalition of over 100 members, committed to ensuring all Vermonters have access to decent, safe, and affordable housing in this time of urgent need.

Our coalition represents much of Vermont's affordable housing landscape. This includes non-profit affordable housing developers, community land trusts, housing and homeless advocacy groups, public housing authorities, regional planners, economic service providers, funders, state agencies, and others. VAHC advocates for affordable housing interests and the interests of low-income Vermonters at the state and federal levels.

Vermont faces a generational housing crisis. The state currently has the second highest per capita rate of homelessness in the US, behind only California, and the lowest rental vacancy rate in the country. Recent estimates suggest that the state needs an additional 40,000 units by 2030 to return to a healthy housing market. In 2022, the state saw an unprecedented 21% jump in housing costs.

Housing experts on the frontlines of this crisis have estimated that \$175 million in capital investments will be needed in 2023 to accelerate the pipeline of permanent, affordable housing. This is not a crisis that will be resolved in one year: sustained investments will be needed over time to meet the state's housing needs.

We are grateful that the legislature recognizes this crisis and is taking steps to address the short- and long-term challenges. We appreciate your committee's work in crafting a strong response to the Administration's Budget Adjustment proposal.

**Consistent with our legislative priorities and our [“Bridges to Housing”](#) proposal, VAHC seeks to adjust the following appropriations from the Governor's FY24 budget:**

B.1100(a)(19)(C): \$26 million for emergency housing, including General Assistance and Adverse Weather Conditions. **VAHC has recommended \$72 million for the General Assistance Emergency Housing program in its Bridges to Housing proposal.**

B.325 \$3.75 million to the Office of Economic Opportunity Emergency Housing to expand shelter capacity. **VAHC has requested \$40 Million to VHCB for capital investments in shelter expansion to decrease reliance on motel-based shelter.**

E.325 HOP Grants and Financial Coaching **VAHC requests a \$20 million increase to the Housing Opportunity Program (HOP) for supportive services and housing navigation.**

**VAHC requests the following additions to the FY24 budget:**

\$5.4 Million to expand the existing SASH for All pilots throughout the state.

\$2 million increase to the Vermont Rental Subsidy program.

\$2 million for rapid rehousing of families with children (HOME Voucher Program).

\$1.5 million for statewide and enhanced Family Supportive Housing.

\$50,000 to update the 2017 Roadmap to End Homelessness.

Creation of a \$5 million fund to prevent non-payment eviction by making funds available for rent arrears where such funds would preserve the tenancy and prevent homelessness.

As we plan for 2024, the housing community is grateful that attention to the housing crisis remains a top priority in the Legislature. The Vermont Affordable Housing Coalition recognizes it will take sustained investments over many years to address the state's crisis. We thank the Committee for its work to ensure that all Vermonters will have access to safe, affordable, and decent housing.

Sincerely,

Anne N. Sosin