

Testimony to Joint Appropriations Committee on FY 24 Budget

2.28.23

Molly Dugan, VHCC Co-Chair and Director of Policy and Strategic Initiatives, Cathedral Square

Good evening, my name is Molly Dugan and I am one of the co-chairs of the Vermont Housing and Conservation Coalition (VHCC). I am also the Director of Policy and Strategic Initiatives for Cathedral Square. Cathedral Square is a non-profit organization created in 1977 and operates 27 affordable housing communities in Chittenden and Franklin counties. VHCC is a coalition of more than 50 private businesses and nonprofit organizations that represent a wide spectrum of interests.

VHCC respectfully requests that you fully fund VHCB at its statutory amount of \$27.8M in the FY 2024 budget. Our members have a proven record of accomplishment to deliver solutions to the urgent community needs. These needs include homelessness, affordable housing, access to the outdoors for physical and mental health, climate resilience and economic development. The Governor's recommended funding for the base budget of \$15.4 M is not only inadequate, it represents a \$10M cut in last year's base appropriation.

Additionally, we ask that you **prioritize allocating one-time funds to address the on-going housing crisis that too many Vermonters experience every day.** As our VHCC members testified while in nine different committees on February 17th, and as dozens testified at a joint hearing on Housing the night before, the spectrum of housing needs and opportunities are large and diverse- new multi-family and farm worker housing, senior housing, manufactured housing, homeownership, supports for the unhoused and transitional housing. VHCC members have projects in their pipelines to address these needs. In fact, VHCB reports that there is approximately \$200M in pipeline projects that would create 2,000 homes. That kind of investment will put us on the path to truly meeting our state's housing needs. And the investment in VHCB requires *permanent affordability* so your investment will benefit Vermonters and our communities forever.

You can count on our members to use every dollar you allocate effectively, equitably and efficiently. By partnering with state agencies, local community provider organizations, and most importantly the people we serve we can create high quality housing that also revitalizes communities building economic opportunity and providing essential services and health improvements.

We thank you for your past investment in VHCB and we urge you to support VHCB at the full statutory share for FY 2024 along with additional one-time funds to address the housing crisis.

Respectfully,

Molly Dugan

VHCC Co-Chair and Director of Policy and Strategic Initiatives, Cathedral Square

