

Housing and Homelessness Alliance of Vermont

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2024 Legislative Priorities

Strategy 1: Accelerate Production of Affordable Housing

In addition to continuing to invest resources, the state must also continue to improve its land use regulations and permitting to allow for housing to be developed. This is social, economic, and environmental justice imperative, and we need to move people out of floodplains, out of harm's way, off of the streets and into affordable housing. In addition to pursuing regulatory reform, HHAV requests that the legislature make \$160 million in housing capital available for the following purposes:

- \$110 million in one-time funding for VHCB (separate and in addition to VHCB receiving \$26 million of base funding representing its full statutory share of the Property Transfer Tax) to provide support and enhance capacity for the production and preservation of affordable rental housing and homeownership units, including:
 - Perpetually affordable homes for low-and moderate-income households.
 - Improvements to manufactured homes and communities.
 - Permanent homes for people experiencing homelessness.
 - Recovery residences.
 - Housing for refugees and farm workers.
 - Shelter production.
- \$10 million for the Vermont Rental Housing Improvement Program (VHIP).
- \$25 million for VHFA's Homeownership Development Program (previously named the Missing Middle Homeownership Development Pilot Program).
- \$15 million for specific programs and services to support manufactured home residents, prioritized as: Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) Healthy Homes Program, Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity's (CVOEO) Mobile Home program, and the Manufactured Housing Improvement & Repair Program (MHIR), administered by Vermont State Housing Authority (VSHA) (see Appendix 1).

Strategy 2: Reimagine Emergency Housing

Establish a state-run program that provides safe and habitable short-term emergency housing for all households experiencing homelessness in a way that: is trauma-informed and provides for the respect and dignity of households; integrates with the existing Coordinated Entry process; support and connects residents with housing navigation, case management, and other community-related services and ties these services to funding for emergency housing operations, and; provides provisions for accountability for emergency housing providers and the state, to ensure contacts and commitments are fulfilled.

- Ensure that there is a bridge to existing or new General Assistance Emergency Housing for anyone remaining in the June Cohort who has not been able to find housing after April 1, 2024.
- Make regulatory changes to existing General Assistance Emergency Housing to go into effect as soon as possible, including the following actions needed immediately to support households receiving housing under Act 81:
 - Simplify certification process to reduce barriers and administrative burden on both providers and guests.

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- Expand the definition of disability to align with the ADA definition and allow doctor's certification for eligibility; definition to include people with a range of physical and mental disabilities and medical vulnerability.
- \$6 million to bridge the gap for 500 households from April 1 until the start of the next fiscal year.
- Reimagine what a modernized statewide emergency housing program would look like after July 1, 2024.
 - This will require a minimum of \$28 million for services.

Strategy 3: Enhance Services and Subsidies

Expand and improve services for households in temporary and permanent housing, with particular attention to housing stability and retention services designed to increase sustainability and prevent homelessness.

- Increase the number of permanent supportive housing units (services cost estimated at \$9,500 per unit). There are currently over 1,700 households on the waiting list.
- \$6 million to establish a statewide placed-based supportive services fund serving up to 2,500 people as recommended in the Strengthening the Housing and Services System report; would support and scale proven and promising programs.

Expand rental subsidies. To be effective, this requires increasing both availability and affordability, as addressed by Strategy 1.

- \$2 million increase for the Vermont Rental Subsidy program; expand eligibility for VRS to be more inclusive of adult-only households; deploy vouchers to support utilization of the Vermont Housing Improvement Program.

Eviction Diversion.

- \$2.5 million for VSHA's new Eviction Diversion/Rent Arrears program, which would cure approximately 389 evictions.