



Vermont Community Action Partnership – FY26 Budget Public Hearing Testimony

Paul Dragon, Executive Director, Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity

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My name is Paul Dragon, and I'm the Executive Director of the Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity, one of the five community action agencies that comprise the statewide Vermont Community Action Partnership, or VCAP. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

VCAP is requesting \$15.8 million in HOP grant funding in the FY26 budget to support a wide variety of homelessness prevention services across the state - a \$6 million increase over FY25.

The State of Vermont - our government and our people - can and must make the choice to shelter and support every person in our state.

Investing in homelessness prevention services is one of the most affordable strategies we have to confront the current homelessness crisis. Homelessness prevention stops homelessness before it starts, helping people retain their existing housing and avoid falling into a cycle of crisis and costly crisis response. Last year, VCAP helped hundreds of Vermonters keep their housing.

When people do become unhoused, prevention services re-house them faster.

Homelessness prevention forestalls the need for shelter or hotel/motel stays, reduces their duration when needed, and reduces reliance on costly emergency services.

Our request includes \$2.4 million for the statewide HOME Family Voucher program, a rapid re-housing initiative that helps vulnerable families with young children secure and retain permanent housing; and \$1.275 million for case management positions statewide that ensure that people in need get access to the exact services they need. Without legislative action, both programs will end on June 30th.

Both requests are included in a list compiled by the Housing and Homelessness Alliance of Vermont, a list which VCAP supports in full.

Again, our request is for \$15.8 million in HOP grant funding for the Vermont Community Action Partnership for statewide homelessness prevention services.

For six decades, Community Action Programs have led the way in helping people in Vermont move out of poverty - your support will ensure we can continue doing that every day.

Thank you.