



Vermont Community Action Partnership – FY26 Budget Public Hearing Testimony

Tom Donahue, Executive Director, BROCC Community Action

February 13, 2025

My name is Tom Donahue, CEO at BROCC Community Action, serving Rutland and Bennington Counties. BROCC is a member of the statewide Vermont Community Action Partnership.

VCAP is requesting \$15.8 million in HOP grant funding in the FY26 budget to support homelessness prevention services across the state.

Homelessness is preventable. The State of Vermont can make the choice to help people find shelter, services, and eventually, security. Meeting people's basic needs, having strong supports and services that are accessible to all, and nurturing connections community-wide, are our strongest tools for ensuring our communities are safe, healthy and strong.

VCAP's homelessness prevention teams establish ongoing personal relationships with people facing homelessness - ensuring they can count on nuanced assistance customized to their specific needs, and to their unique path to permanent housing and economic security.

VCAP's request includes \$1.35 million in support for the recruitment, retention and expansion of our overworked and under-resourced front line team members.

VCAP's request also includes an increase of \$1 million to support direct financial assistance for people facing homelessness. This kind of short-term, one-time, and often, very simple support, helps people retain their housing and avoid falling into homelessness. Direct financial assistance can help with short-term back rent, cover first/last month's rent and security deposit on a new place to live, utility deposits, debt reduction, transportation to employment, moving costs, and other cheap interventions that help people stay housed.

Investing in this kind of support is exponentially cheaper than the kinds of interventions that become necessary when people become unhoused.

Again, VCAP is requesting \$15.8 million in HOP grant funding in the FY26 budget to support homelessness prevention services across the state.

We also ask that you support the FY26 budget requests of the Housing and Homelessness Alliance of Vermont, of which we are members.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.