



19 May 2025

Senate Committee on Appropriations  
Vermont State House  
115 State Street  
Montpelier, VT 05633-5301

RE: H.91

Dear Appropriations Committee Members:

I'm writing to you regarding H.91 and have cc'd Addison County Senators Hardy and Heffernan in this correspondence.

John Graham Housing & Services (JGHS) receives annual Housing Opportunity Program (HOP) funding in support of the John Graham Shelter in Vergennes. As grantees with a longstanding, successful relationship with the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) and HOP, Vermont shelter directors across the state and I are deeply troubled about H.91's stipulation to move HOP funding to local Community Action Programs (CAPs).

Such a move, without a proper service impact analysis, will result in a rushed systemic change that will cost our system of care more money and harm the people we serve—potentially increasing our unhoused population's dependence on the motel program and/or creating more unsheltered homelessness.

I know this is not the goal of H.91; the goal is to create more integration and a stronger system. However, moving HOP to CAP agencies at this time would destabilize what has been an effective structure that has been serving our state very well for many years. At this time of uncertainty, we should hold steady to what we know works. The HOP, as administered by OEO, works.

HOP includes complex federal requirements from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) related to shelter policies, procedures, and documentation—everything from shelter intake and adherence to coordinated entry standards, to shelter safety and operational requirements. OEO's expertise in HUD regulations ensures that Vermont shelters meet these requirements.

Should H.91 be approved as written, the learning curve for CAPs (especially with regard to HUD regulations) would be steep. If the HOP change happens at the same time as the GA program is transitioned to CAPs, services to unhoused families run the risk of comprehensive destabilization.

While I understand the feeling of urgency when so many things are uncertain, I suggest we take the time to ensure the outcomes truly align with our values. Please consider the removal of HOP's transition to CAPs in H.91.

Very sincerely,

Susan Whitmore  
Executive Director, John Graham Housing & Services  
Chair, Addison County Housing Coalition  
Board Member, Housing & Homelessness Alliance of Vermont

cc: Senator Ruth Hardy and Senator Steven Heffernan

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