

April 18, 2025

Dear Chair Perchlik and Members of the Senate Committee on Appropriations,

As your Committee considers funding priorities for FY26, we urge you to prevent Vermont's homelessness crisis from getting worse. Specifically, we urge your Committee to include the following funding requests in the FY26 budget (in addition to supporting the homelessness prevention and response funding included in the House-passed FY26 budget):

- \$44.6M – General Assistance Emergency Housing Program funding to keep all statutorily defined “vulnerable” Vermonters sheltered (as recommended by the House Committee on Human Services). This number is inclusive of the GA funding in the House-passed budget. We also urge the Committee to support the removal of the maximum day and maximum hotel room caps (also as recommended by the House Committee on Human Services).
- \$3.75M – OEO to fund 33 critical case management positions that will end in June 2025 when federal ERAP money expires (as recommended by the House Committee on Human Services).

Ensure a Safety Net for Vermont's Most Vulnerable Unhoused Residents

According to the 2024 Vermont Point in Time count, there were 3,458 unhoused Vermonters in a single night, including 737 children and 646 Vermonters 55 years old or older.¹ This number is an undercount, as it reflects only the people who engaged with our state's dedicated and perpetually under-resourced shelter service providers on the Point-in-Time count day.

To give some perspective on how large of a problem this is, Vermont's statewide shelter capacity is 655 households, and all are full.² There is literally no safe place for potentially thousands of Vermonters to go.

The General Assistance Emergency Housing Program, which is only available to Vermonters the state has deemed vulnerable,³ has served as the vital safety net for thousands of our state's most vulnerable unhoused community members. There is no backup plan beyond this. Without this funding, we will continue to send families with children and vulnerable adults into the streets and woods to live.

¹ Housing & Homelessness Alliance of Vermont, et. al., 2024 Vermont's Annual Point-in-Time Count, June 2024, p. 1, available at <https://helpingtohousevt.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/2024-PIT-Report-final.pdf>.

² See., Vermont Dept. of Children and Families, March 31st Housing Report, p. 13, Mar. 25, 2025, available at <https://legislature.vermont.gov/assets/Legislative-Reports/Act-113-Monthly-Housing-Reporting-3.31.2025.pdf>.

³ Eligibility is limited to: (1) is 65 years of age or older; (2) has a disability that can be documented by: (A) receipt of Supplemental Security Income or Social Security Disability Insurance; or (B) a form developed by the Department as a means of documenting a qualifying disability or health condition that requires: (i) the applicant's name, date of birth, and the last four digits of the applicant's Social Security number or other identifying number; (ii) a description of the applicant's disability or health condition; (iii) a description of the risk posed to the applicant's health, safety, or welfare if temporary emergency housing is not authorized pursuant to this section; and (iv) a certification of a health care provider, as defined in 18 V.S.A. § 9481, that includes the provider's credentials, credential number, address, and phone number; (3) is a child 19 years of age or under; (4) is pregnant; (5) has experienced the death of a spouse, domestic partner, or minor child that caused the household to lose its housing; (6) has experienced a natural disaster, such as a flood, fire, or hurricane; (7) is under a court-ordered eviction or constructive eviction due to circumstances over which the household has no control; or (8) is experiencing domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, human trafficking, hate violence, or other dangerous or lifethreatening conditions that relate to violence against the individual or a household member that caused the household to lose its housing.

Prevent Vermont's Homelessness Crisis from Getting Worse

We urge your Committee to support an additional \$3.75 million to fund 33 critical case management positions that are set to go away in June when federal ERAP money expires. Without these vital positions, we will see more of our neighbors become unhoused and again compound the problem.

Thank you for considering this urgent request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Frank Knaack'.

Frank Knaack
Executive Director