



18 April 2025

Dear Chair Perchlik and members of the Senate Committee on Appropriations:

I am writing on behalf of John Graham Housing & Services (JGHS). Since 1981, JGHS has been providing emergency shelter, affordable housing, and essential services to individuals and families without a home or facing housing instability in Addison County.

As the Senate Committee on Appropriations 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:

- \$44.6M – General Assistance Emergency Housing Program funding to keep statutorily defined “vulnerable” Vermonters. 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).

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. 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. In Addison County, there are 93 unhoused families on our Coordinated Entry (CE) waitlist for affordable housing.

To give some perspective on how large of a problem this is, Vermont's statewide shelter capacity is 655 households, and all are full. There is literally no safe place for potentially thousands of Vermonters to go. The John Graham Shelter in Vergennes, the only shelter in Addison County serving families with children, is full and our waitlist for families is currently at 23 households.

The General Assistance Emergency Housing Program, which is only available to Vermonters the state has deemed vulnerable, has served as the vital safety net for thousands of our state's most vulnerable unhoused community members who cannot find a place in the already-full shelters. 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.

In addition, we urge Senate Committee on Appropriations to support an additional \$3.75 million to fund 33 critical case management positions across the state that are set to go away in June when federal ERAP money expires—including ERAP-funded positions at JGHS that currently provide case management for 25 families. 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,

Susan Whitmore
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Serving Addison County

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