

1 TO THE HONORABLE SENATE:

2 The Committee on Health and Welfare to which was referred House Bill
3 No. 91 entitled “An act relating to the Vermont Homeless Emergency
4 Assistance and Responsive Transition to Housing Program” respectfully
5 reports that it has considered the same and recommends that the Senate
6 propose to the House that the bill be amended by striking out all after the
7 enacting clause and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

8 * * * Findings and Legislative Intent * * *

9 Sec. 1. FINDINGS

10 The General Assembly finds that:

11 (1) according to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban
12 Development’s 2024 Annual Homelessness Assessment Report, Vermont had
13 the fourth highest rate of homelessness in 2024 in that 53 of every 10,000
14 Vermonters are experiencing homelessness, with only Hawaii, New York, and
15 Oregon experiencing higher rates;

16 (2) in 2023, according to the same Annual Homelessness Assessment
17 Report, 51 of every 10,000 Vermonters were experiencing homelessness;

18 (3) according to the Vermont 2024 Point-in-Time Count, there were
19 approximately 3,458 unhoused individuals in Vermont, which represents a 300
20 percent increase over the 1,110 unhoused individuals prior to the COVID-19
21 pandemic in 2020;

1 (4) of the 3,458 unhoused individuals in Vermont identified by the
2 Vermont 2024 Point-in-Time Count, 166 experienced unsheltered
3 homelessness, which is the highest count of unsheltered homeless individuals
4 in Vermont within the past decade;

5 (5) according to the Vermont 2024 Point-in-Time Count, over 35
6 percent of those Vermonters experiencing homelessness were unhoused for
7 more than one year and over 72 percent were unhoused for more than 90 days;

8 (6) according to the Vermont 2024 Point-in-Time Count, 737 of those
9 Vermonters experiencing homelessness were children and youth under 18
10 years of age and 646 were 55 years of age or older;

11 (7) according to the Vermont 2024 Point-in-Time Count, Black
12 Vermonters are 5.6 times more likely to be unhoused as compared to white
13 Vermonters;

14 (8) the 2024 Vermont Housing Needs Assessment notes that 36,000
15 primary homes are needed in Vermont between 2025–2029, 3,295 of which are
16 needed to address homelessness; and

17 (9) the 2024 Vermont Housing Needs Assessment notes that “[h]alf of
18 all Vermont renters are cost-burdened, and one-in-four pay more than 50
19 [percent] of their income on housing costs, putting them at high risk of
20 eviction,” which “is heightened by Vermont’s rental vacancy rate of 3
21 [percent], which is well below the 5 [percent] rate of a healthy market.”

1 Sec. 2. LEGISLATIVE INTENT

2 (a) It is the intent of the General Assembly that unsheltered homelessness
3 be eliminated and that homelessness in Vermont be rare, brief, and
4 nonrecurring.

5 (b) It is the intent of the General Assembly that the Vermont Homeless
6 Emergency Assistance and Responsive Transition to Housing Program
7 established in 33 V.S.A. chapter 22 is a step toward ensuring that:

8 (1) homelessness be reduced in Vermont and interim shelter
9 opportunities be available to provide a stable pathway to permanent housing
10 for all Vermonters experiencing homelessness, including safe shelter options
11 for individuals living in unsheltered homelessness;

12 (2) Vermont increase the supply of emergency shelter as well as
13 permanent supportive housing that meets the specific needs of individuals;

14 (3) community components of all shelter types are integrated in a
15 systemic manner;

16 (4) time limits, night-by-night shelter, relocation between interim shelter
17 sites, and other disruptions in housing stability be eliminated to the extent
18 possible;

19 (5) Vermont’s emergency housing statutes, rules, policies, procedures,
20 and practices be modeled on Housing First principles; and

21 (6) noncongregate shelter be used to the extent possible.

1 Assistance and Responsive Transition to Housing Program established in this
2 chapter; and

3 (2) reduce reliance on the use of hotel and motel rooms to shelter
4 participating households and expand the use of emergency shelters throughout
5 the State for this purpose.

6 § 2203. DEFINITIONS

7 As used in this chapter:

8 (1) “At-risk of homelessness” means in peril of imminently losing a
9 primary, night-time residence or precariously housed.

10 (2) “Community action agency” means an agency designated pursuant
11 to 3 V.S.A. chapter 59.

12 (3) “Community-based shelter” means a shelter that meets the
13 Department’s standards for the operation of shelters.

14 (4) “Department” means the Department for Children and Families.

15 (5) “Extreme weather event” means extreme hot or cold temperatures or
16 weather events, such as hurricanes, flooding, or blizzards, that create
17 hazardous conditions for outdoor habitation by humans.

18 (6) “Homeless” means lacking a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime
19 residence.

20 (7) “Household” means an individual and any dependents for whom the
21 individual is legally responsible, who is domiciled in Vermont as evidenced by

1 an intent to dwell in Vermont and to return to Vermont if temporarily absent,
2 coupled with an act or acts consistent with that intent. “Household” includes
3 individuals who reside together as one economic unit, including those who are
4 married, parties to a civil union, or unmarried.

5 (8) “Unsheltered homelessness” means sleeping in a location not
6 designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation.

7 **§ 2204. REGIONAL ADVISORY COUNCILS**

8 (a) Each community action agency shall convene a regional advisory
9 council whose membership reflects the growing diversity among Vermonters,
10 including individuals who are Black, Indigenous, and Persons of Color, as well
11 as with regards to socioeconomic status, geographic location, gender, sexual
12 identity, and disability status. Members of an advisory council shall include
13 organizations providing services in the region. It may collaborate with
14 individuals with lived experience of homelessness, community partners, State
15 partners, housing providers, local housing coalitions, providers of coordinated
16 entry, continuums of care, faith-based organizations, and municipalities in the
17 region served by the community action agency.

18 (b) Each regional advisory council shall provide advice and
19 recommendations to the community action agency in its region regarding the
20 design and implementation of this Program. The work of each regional

1 advisory council shall be informed by regional planning commissions' housing
2 targets.

3 (c) Each regional advisory council shall meet on at least a quarterly basis.

4 (d) The regional advisory councils shall have the legal and technical
5 support of the Department.

6 * * * Vermont Homeless Emergency Assistance and Responsive Transition to
7 Housing Program; Effective July 1, 2026 * * *

8 Sec. 4. 33 V.S.A. chapter 22 is amended to read:

9 CHAPTER 22. VERMONT HOMELESS EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE

10 AND RESPONSIVE TRANSITION TO HOUSING PROGRAM

11 * * *

12 § 2203. DEFINITIONS

13 As used in this chapter:

14 * * *

15 (2) "Community action agency" means an agency designated pursuant
16 to 3 V.S.A. chapter 59 or the entity or entities otherwise authorized by the
17 Department pursuant to section 2205 of this chapter to fulfil the duties of a
18 community action agency under this chapter.

19 * * *

1 § 2204. ESTABLISHMENT; VERMONT HOMELESS EMERGENCY
2 ASSISTANCE AND RESPONSIVE TRANSITION TO HOUSING
3 PROGRAM

4 The Vermont Homeless Emergency Assistance and Responsive Transition
5 to Housing Program is established in the Department to provide services to
6 households that are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless, to the extent
7 funds exist.

8 (1) The Department shall select and contract with a statewide
9 organization that has population-specific service experience to specifically
10 provide or cause to be provided supportive services and shelter to those
11 households that are experiencing or that have experienced domestic or sexual
12 violence.

13 (2) All other participating households shall be served by or through a
14 community-based action agency responsible for a geographically distinct
15 region of the State. Community action agencies participating in the Program
16 shall provide or cause to be provided supportive services, extreme weather
17 event shelter, and emergency shelter.

18 § 2205. AUTHORIZATION PROCESS; REAUTHORIZATION REVIEW

19 (a) The Department shall authorize a community-action agency to serve or
20 cause to be served households that are homeless or at risk of becoming
21 homeless in a geographically distinct region of the State if it meets the criteria

1 in this section. If a community action agency cannot fulfil its responsibilities
2 under this chapter, the Department shall work with other community action
3 agencies or other appropriate community entities to ensure that there is not a
4 gap in services in a community action agency’s region.

5 (b) A community action agency providing or causing to provide services in
6 accordance with this chapter shall have:

7 (1) existing or planned infrastructure to support households in the
8 region, including an established leadership team, a human resources staff, and
9 the ability to receive grant funding and issue subgrants;

10 (2) the ability to meet the Department’s reporting requirements,
11 including having a past history of reporting compliance;

12 (3) the ability to perform the services required pursuant to section 2206
13 of this chapter;

14 (4) any outcome measures established in this chapter;

15 (5) community connections with other providers in the region, including
16 local housing coalitions, housing providers, providers of coordinated entry,
17 continuums of care, faith-based organizations, and providers of services to
18 individuals who are older Vermonters; individuals who have disabilities,
19 substance use disorder, or a mental health condition; individuals reentering the
20 community after incarceration; individuals transitioning from the care and

1 custody of the Commissioner for Children and Families; and families with
2 children; and

3 (6) the ability to provide plain language communications to households
4 receiving services.

5 (c) Not less than every three years, the Department shall conduct a
6 reauthorization review of each community action agency providing or causing
7 to provide services pursuant to this chapter. An organization that no longer
8 meets the requirements in subsection (b) of this section or that has failed to
9 meet the needs of households in its region that are homeless or at risk of
10 homelessness may be subject to remedial assistance from the Department or
11 the Department may not choose to reauthorize the community action agency.

12 § 2206. VHEARTH SERVICES

13 (a) The Department shall enter into an agreement with a statewide
14 organization with population-specific experience serving households that are
15 experiencing or that have experienced domestic and sexual violence. The
16 organization shall provide or cause to be provided various shelter and case
17 management services that support households.

18 (b) Each community-based organization shall offer or cause to be offered,
19 in collaboration with community partners, each of the following services
20 within its region:

21 (1) supportive services, including:

- 1 (A) intake assessments and services for diversion from homelessness,
2 which may include regional intake shelters;
- 3 (B) household needs assessments;
- 4 (C) individualized household plans to address identified needs;
- 5 (D) assistance obtaining and retaining housing, including financial
6 assistance;
- 7 (E) referrals to other services and supports, including economic
8 benefits;
- 9 (F) peer-supported services;
- 10 (G) landlord-tenant outreach, education, and conflict resolution;
- 11 (H) housing navigation services;
- 12 (I) health care assistance, including treatment for mental health
13 conditions and substance use disorder;
- 14 (J) job training and employment services;
- 15 (K) services related to disability and independent living;
- 16 (L) advocacy; and
- 17 (M) progress monitoring and interventions; and
- 18 (2) the operation of extreme weather event shelters, which may include
19 time-limited congregate accommodations and may be provided through
20 agreements with municipalities or other entities, utilizing available data and
21 considering geographic access to prioritize funding for this purpose; and

1 (3) the operation of emergency shelters in manner that builds upon the
2 federally required community planning process and prioritizes households in
3 need of the services of an emergency shelter, which may include community-
4 based shelters, temporary use of hotels or motels, lease agreements for full or
5 partial use of an existing building, need-specific shelter arrangements, master
6 grant leases, the development of shelter capacity, or other arrangements or
7 combinations of arrangements that comply with the intent of this chapter.

8 § 2207. USE OF HOTEL AND MOTEL ROOMS

9 (a) It is the intent of the General Assembly to decrease reliance on hotel
10 and motel rooms for emergency housing. Annually, as shelter capacity
11 increases in each region of the State, the use of hotel and motel rooms for
12 emergency housing in that region shall decrease by the same percentage as the
13 increase in shelter capacity. Annually, as part of the Department’s budget
14 presentation, it shall provide data pertaining to the percentage of increased
15 shelter capacity from the previous fiscal year in each region and how that
16 increase impacts the corresponding hotel and motel room usage for emergency
17 housing in each region pursuant to this subsection.

18 (b) If hotels and motels are used to provide emergency shelter pursuant to
19 this chapter, the hotel and motel operators shall comply with Program rules and
20 the following rules:

1 (1) Department of Health, Licensed Lodging Establishment Rule (CVR
2 13-140-023); and

3 (2) Department of Public Safety, Vermont Fire and Building Safety
4 Code (CVR 28-070-001).

5 (c) Annually, the Department shall propose hotel and motel rates as part of
6 its budget presentation for approval by the General Assembly. A community
7 action agency shall not pay or cause to be paid with State monies a per room,
8 per night basis that exceeds the rate approved by the General Assembly.

9 (d) If a hotel or motel is being utilized:

10 (1) a community action agency shall enter into agreements for the use of
11 blocks of hotel and motel rooms and negotiate the conditions of use for those
12 blocks, including access for providers of case management or other supportive
13 services; and

14 (2) prioritize the use of hotel and motel room agreements over
15 individual per room, per night hotel or motel room use, unless it is not
16 appropriate to a household's needs.

17 § 2208. VHEARTH; DUTIES OF THE DEPARTMENT

18 (a) The Department, with oversight from the Agency of Human Services,
19 shall have statewide responsibility for meeting the intent of this chapter,
20 including statewide planning, system development, and the involvement of all
21 the Agency's departments.

1 (b) For the purpose of providing administrative oversight and monitoring of
2 the Program established in this chapter, the Department shall:

3 (1)(A) maintain guidance regarding when extreme weather event
4 shelters shall be operated, including flexibility for regional weather conditions;
5 and

6 (B) maintain a website with the locations of all extreme weather
7 event shelters;

8 (2) include as part of any review of a community action agency required
9 pursuant to 3 V.S.A. chapter 59, the community action agency’s ability to
10 perform the requirements of this chapter;

11 (3)(A) consult with the community action agencies and the statewide
12 organization serving households that are experiencing or that have experienced
13 domestic and sexual violence, to develop appropriate resource allocations and
14 methods for adjustment that take into account available data, the presence of
15 community-based providers, and customary resource allocation methods,
16 economic indicators, rate of homelessness, rental vacancy rates, and other
17 variables, as appropriate; and

18 (B) annually, distribute funding to each community action agency
19 and the statewide organization serving households that are experiencing or that
20 have experienced domestic and sexual violence using the allocation formula
21 developed pursuant to subdivision (A) of this subdivision (b)(3), or if the

1 Department and community action agencies agree, disperse a joint allocation
2 for all community action agencies, which the community action agencies shall
3 determine how to distribute amongst themselves;

4 (4) provide support and technical assistance to the community action
5 agencies, other community partners, and the statewide organization serving
6 households that are experiencing or that have experienced domestic and sexual
7 violence;

8 (5) identify specific administrative resources that could be transitioned
9 to community operations;

10 (6) develop and maintain standards for the operation of community-
11 based shelters; and

12 (7) adopt rules pursuant to 3 V.S.A. chapter 25, in consultation with the
13 community action agencies and the statewide organization serving households
14 that are experiencing or that have experienced domestic and sexual violence, as
15 appropriate, for the implementation of this chapter, including accommodations
16 for individuals with a disability.

17 § 2209. REGIONAL PLANNING; NEEDS ASSESSMENTS

18 (a) As part of the plan required every three years pursuant to 3 V.S.A.
19 § 3904 and the federally required planning and needs assessments for the
20 continuum of care, the community action agencies shall develop a regional
21 needs assessment and planning process, in collaboration with community and

1 State partners, for use in each community action agency’s region to inform
2 future plans addressing housing and homelessness in each region of the State.

3 The regional needs assessment and planning process plans shall include:

4 (1) addressing progress in reducing the number of households
5 experiencing homelessness in a region;

6 (2) assessing the rate households placed in permanent housing return to
7 homelessness and the underlying reasons;

8 (3) identifying resources developed and utilized in the region to address
9 homelessness and efforts to improve the equitable distribution of these
10 resources in the region;

11 (4) reporting the rate of household participation with coordinated entry
12 processes and case management services;

13 (5) identifying system gaps and the funding needed to address those
14 gaps, including periodic inflationary adjustments; and

15 (6) utilizing data, including Vermont’s Point-in-Time Count,
16 coordinated entry assessment results, and community conversations.

17 (b) Every three years, each community action agency shall submit plans
18 developed pursuant to this section to the Department in a format prescribed by
19 the Department. Upon receipt of the plans, the Department shall consolidate
20 the results of these reports and submit the consolidated report to the House

1 Committee on Human Services and to the Senate Committee on Health and
2 Welfare.

3 § 2210. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

4 On or before the last day of each month, the Department shall submit a
5 report to the House Committee on Human Services, the Senate Committee on
6 Health and Welfare, and the Joint Fiscal Committee addressing:

7 (1) the number of households served through the Program, by household
8 size; eligibility category, if applicable; region; service provider; and type of
9 service;

10 (2) changes in shelter capacity since the previous reporting period;

11 (3) the number of diversions made during the previous reporting period;

12 (4) the number of households whose intake assessment indicated a
13 potential need for services from each department within the Agency;

14 (5) the number of beds available for emergency housing in each region
15 of the State, with separate reporting on the number of beds available in nursing
16 homes and residential care homes for individuals whose screening indicates
17 they could meet the clinical criteria for those settings and the number of
18 emergency beds available for individuals whose screening indicates they do
19 not meet the clinical criteria, including low-barrier shelters, beds for youth, and
20 beds for individuals who have experienced domestic violence;

1 (6) the number of households that have been successfully transitioned to
2 permanent housing since the previous reporting period, the types of housing
3 settings in which they have been placed, and the supportive services they are
4 receiving in conjunction with their housing;

5 (7) the outlook for transitioning additional households to permanent
6 housing in the coming months, including an estimate of the number of
7 households likely to be placed per month;

8 (8) any State rules and local regulations and ordinances that are
9 impeding the timely development of safe, decent, affordable housing in
10 Vermont communities in order to:

11 (A) identify areas in which flexibility or discretion are available; and

12 (B) advise whether the temporary suspension of relevant State rules
13 and local regulations and ordinances, or the adoption or amendment of State
14 rules, would facilitate faster and less costly revitalization of existing housing
15 and construction of new housing units;

16 (9) an inventory of all subgrants issued by the statewide organization
17 serving households experiencing or who have experienced domestic or sexual
18 violence and by each community action agency; and

19 (10) gaps in services.

1 § ~~2204~~ 2011. REGIONAL ADVISORY COUNCILS

2 (a) Each community action agency shall convene a regional advisory
3 council whose membership reflects the growing diversity among Vermonters,
4 including individuals who are Black, Indigenous, and Persons of Color, as well
5 as with regards to socioeconomic status, geographic location, gender, sexual
6 identity, and disability status. Members of an advisory council shall include
7 organizations providing services in the region pursuant to section 2206 of this
8 chapter. It may collaborate with individuals with lived experience of
9 homelessness, community partners, State partners, housing providers, local
10 housing coalitions, providers of coordinated entry, continuums of care, faith-
11 based organizations, and municipalities in the region served by the community
12 action agency.

13 * * *

14 * * * Vermont Homeless Emergency Assistance and Responsive Transition to
15 Housing Program; Effective July 1, 2027 * * *

16 Sec. 5. 33 V.S.A. § 2202 is amended to read:

17 § 2202. PURPOSE

18 It is the purpose of the General Assembly to:

19 (1) replace the provision of emergency housing through the General
20 Assistance Program established in chapter 21 of this title and the Housing
21 Opportunity Grant Program and use funds and resources previously attributed

1 to those programs, and any other identified State and federal monies, to fund
2 the Vermont Homeless Emergency Assistance and Responsive Transition to
3 Housing Program established in this chapter; and

4 (2) reduce reliance on the use of hotel and motel rooms to shelter
5 participating households and expand the use of emergency shelters throughout
6 the State for this purpose.

7 * * * Vermont Homeless Emergency Assistance and Responsive Transition to
8 Housing Program; Effective July 1, 2030 * * *

9 Sec. 6. 33 V.S.A. § 2210 is amended to read:

10 § 2210. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

11 On or before the last day of each every third month, the Department shall
12 submit a report to the House Committee on Human Services; and the Senate
13 Committee on Health and Welfare, and the Joint Fiscal Committee addressing:

14 * * *

15 * * * Implementation Planning and Initial Regional Assessments * * *

16 Sec. 7. VHEARTH IMPLEMENTATION PLANNING

17 (a) On or before October 1, 2025, the Department for Children and
18 Families, in collaboration with the community action agencies, regional
19 advisory councils established pursuant to 33 V.S.A. § 2204, and the statewide
20 organization serving households that are experiencing or that have experienced
21 domestic or sexual violence, shall submit the first of two written

1 implementation plans to the House Committee on Human Services, the Senate
2 Committee on Health and Welfare, and the Joint Fiscal Committee outlining its
3 initial plans for the implementation of the Vermont Homeless Emergency
4 Assistance and Responsive Transition to Housing Program established by 33
5 V.S.A. chapter 22 by July 1, 2026. Specifically, the first implementation plan
6 shall include:

7 (1) a process that community action agencies, in coordination with the
8 Department, shall use to conduct regularly occurring regional needs
9 assessments and develop future regional plans;

10 (2) recommended performance measures to evaluate the community
11 action agencies and the statewide organization serving households that are
12 experiencing or that have experienced domestic or sexual violence in carrying
13 out their duties under 33 V.S.A. chapter 22, including:

14 (A) the provision of any previously agreed upon information to
15 enable the Department to evaluate the services provided through grant funds,
16 the effect on households receiving services, and an accounting of expended
17 grant fund; and

18 (B) performance measures that may be specific to an individual
19 region of the State or provider;

20 (3) recommended eligibility for each of the services offered through 33
21 V.S.A. chapter 22;

1 (4) guidance regarding when extreme weather event shelters shall be
2 operated, including flexibility for regional weather conditions; and

3 (5) a recommendation for the appropriate level of required intake and
4 assessment processes for each type of shelter that a household may utilize.

5 (b) On or before January 15, 2026, the Department for Children and
6 Families, in collaboration with the community action agencies, regional
7 advisory councils established pursuant to 33 V.S.A. § 2204, and the statewide
8 organization serving households that are experiencing or that have experienced
9 domestic or sexual violence, shall submit the second of two written
10 implementation plans to the House Committee on Human Services and the
11 Senate Committee on Health and Welfare outlining its initial plans for the
12 implementation of the Vermont Homeless Emergency Assistance and
13 Responsive Transition to Housing Program established by 33 V.S.A. chapter
14 22 on or before July 1, 2026. Specifically, the second implementation plan
15 shall include recommendations on the following:

16 (1) funding allocations among the community action agencies and other
17 providers, including for services specific to households that are experiencing or
18 that have experienced domestic or sexual violence;

19 (2) additional State and federal funding and other resources identified
20 for the Program;

1 (3) appropriate supportive services specific to the level of shelter a
2 household utilizes or whether the household is at risk of homelessness or
3 experiencing unsheltered homelessness;

4 (4) establishing an appeals process that includes a hearing before the
5 Human Services Board and an option for an expedited appeals process;

6 (5) expanded use of 211 within the intake system;

7 (6) whether continuation in emergency shelter should include an
8 expectation regarding household participation in case management services or
9 other expectations such as night limits on the use of hotels and motels, and, if
10 so, what elements and in what circumstances participation in case management
11 services or other expectations should be applied;

12 (7) whether the use of emergency shelter should include financial
13 participation, and, if so, what that participation should include;

14 (8) how to best ensure that there is equitable access to shelter and
15 supportive services for households experiencing homelessness; and

16 (9) any anticipated challenges requiring a legislative solution.

17 **Sec. 8. INTERIM AND FINAL VEARTH IMPLEMENTATION PLANS**

18 Prior to the enactment of the Vermont Homeless Emergency Assistance and
19 Responsive Transition to Housing Program on July 1, 2026, the community
20 action agencies shall conduct initial regional needs assessments in accordance
21 with the process developed in Sec. 7(a)(1) of this act. On or before January 15,

1 2026, the community action agencies shall submit one comprehensive progress
2 report, including estimated fiscal year 2027 budget needs and estimated
3 administrative costs. On or before April 1, 2026, the community action
4 agencies shall submit one comprehensive report detailing the results of each
5 region’s regional needs assessment and implementation plans, which shall not
6 exceed the budgetary estimates provided in the progress report. The initial
7 regional needs assessment conducted pursuant to this section shall include:

8 (1) addressing progress in reducing the number of households
9 experiencing homelessness in a region;

10 (2) assessing the rate households placed in permanent housing return to
11 homelessness and the underlying reasons;

12 (3) identifying resources developed and utilized in the region to address
13 homelessness and efforts to improve the equitable distribution of these
14 resources in the region;

15 (4) reporting the rate of household participation with coordinated entry
16 processes and case management services;

17 (5) identifying system gaps and the funding needed to address those
18 gaps, including periodic inflationary adjustments; and

19 (6) utilizing data, including Vermont’s Point-in-Time Count,
20 coordinated entry assessment results, and community conversations.

1 developmental disability or children and adolescents with a severe emotional
2 disturbance in accordance with the provisions of 33 V.S.A. chapter 43 who
3 reside within the geographic area served by the agency.

4 * * * Community Action Agencies * * *

5 Sec. 10. 3 V.S.A. chapter 59 is amended to read:

6 CHAPTER 59. COMMUNITY ~~SERVICES~~ ACTION AGENCIES

7 § 3901. FINDINGS AND PURPOSE

8 (a) Recognizing that the economic well-being and social equity of every
9 Vermonter has long been a fundamental concern of the State, it remains
10 evident that ~~poverty continues to be the lot of~~ a substantial number of
11 Vermont's population continues to experience poverty. It is the policy of ~~this~~
12 the State to help develop the full potential of each of its citizens so they can
13 contribute to the fullest extent possible to the life of our communities and the
14 State as a whole.

15 (b) It is the purpose of this chapter to strengthen, supplement, and
16 coordinate efforts that further this policy through:

17 (1) the strengthening of community capabilities for planning,
18 coordinating, and managing federal, State, and other sources of assistance
19 related to the problem of poverty;

20 (2) the better organization and utilization of a range of services related
21 to the needs of ~~the poor~~ individuals with low income; and

1 (3) the broadening of the resource base of programs to secure a more
2 active role in assisting ~~the poor~~ individuals with low income from business,
3 labor, and other groups from the private sector.

4 § 3902. OFFICE OF ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

5 (a) The Director of the Office of Economic Opportunity is hereby
6 authorized to allocate available financial assistance for community ~~services~~
7 action agencies and programs in accordance with State and federal law and
8 regulation.

9 (b) The Director may provide financial assistance to community ~~services~~
10 action agencies for the planning, conduct, administration, and evaluation of
11 community ~~service~~ action programs to provide a range of services and
12 activities having a measurable and potentially major impact on causes of
13 poverty in the community or in areas of the community where poverty is a
14 particularly acute problem. Components of those services and activities may
15 involve, without limitation of other activities and supporting facilities designed
16 to assist ~~low income~~ participants with low income:

17 (1) to secure and retain meaningful employment;

18 (2) to obtain adequate education;

19 (3) to make better use of available income;

20 (4) to ~~provide and maintain adequate housing and a suitable living~~
21 environment have access to safe, secure, permanent housing;

1 The Director shall designate private nonprofit ~~community-based~~
2 community-based organizations ~~who~~ that have demonstrated or ~~who~~ that can
3 demonstrate the ability to provide services and activities as defined in
4 subsection 3902(b) of this title as community ~~services~~ action agencies.

5 § 3904. COMMUNITY ~~SERVICES~~ ACTION AGENCY PLAN

6 Each designated community ~~services~~ action agency shall determine the need
7 for activities and services within the area served by the agency and shall
8 thereafter prepare a community services plan ~~which~~ that describes the method
9 by which the agency will provide those services. The plan shall include a
10 schedule for the anticipated provision of new or additional services and shall
11 specify the resources ~~which~~ that are needed by and available to the agency to
12 implement the plan. The community services plan shall be completed every
13 three years and updated annually. The plan shall include the regional needs
14 assessment required under 33 V.S.A. § 2211.

15 § 3905. COMMUNITY ~~SERVICES~~ ACTION AGENCIES;

16 ADMINISTRATION

17 (a) Each community ~~services~~ action agency shall administer its programs as
18 set out in the community services plan and as approved by its board of
19 directors.

20 (b) Each board of a nonprofit ~~community-based~~ community-based
21 organization that is designated a community ~~services~~ action agency under

1 section 3903 of this chapter shall have an executive committee of not more
2 than seven members who shall be representative of the composition of the
3 board and the board shall be so constituted that:

4 * * *

5 (2) one-third of the members of the board are persons chosen in
6 accordance with election procedures adequate to ~~assure~~ ensure that they are
7 representative of ~~the poor~~ individuals with low income in the area served; and

8 (3) the remainder of the members of the board are officials or members
9 of business, industry, labor, religious, welfare, education, or other major
10 groups and interests in the community.

11 (c) Each member of ~~the a~~ board selected to represent a specific geographic
12 area within a community shall reside in the area ~~he or she~~ the member
13 represents. ~~No person selected under subdivisions (2) or (3) of subsection (b)~~
14 ~~as a member of a board shall serve on such board for more than five~~
15 ~~consecutive years, or more than a total of 10 years~~ Each board shall adopt term
16 limits to govern its members.

17 * * * Appropriations * * *

18 Sec. **11**. APPROPRIATION; TRANSITION PLANNING

19 In fiscal year 2026, \$10,000,000.00 of one-time funding is appropriated
20 from the General Fund as follows:

1 (1) \$6,500,000.00 to the Department for Children and Families for
2 distribution to the community action agencies and the statewide organization
3 servicing households experiencing or who have experienced domestic and sexual
4 violence;

5 (2) \$500,000.00 to the Department for Children and Families for
6 contractual and other system transformation assistance; and

7 (3) \$3,000,000.00 to the Department for Children and Families for the
8 continued development of shelter capacity in the State.

9 Sec. 12. FUTURE APPROPRIATIONS; LEGISLATIVE INTENT

10 It is the intent of the General Assembly that:

11 (1) in fiscal year 2027 and thereafter, equivalent funds and resources,
12 base and one-time, used in fiscal year 2025 for General Assistance emergency
13 housing be redesignated for the Vermont Homeless Emergency Assistance and
14 Responsive Transition to Housing Program pursuant to 33 V.S.A. chapter 22;
15 and

16 (2) in fiscal year 2028 and thereafter, equivalent funds and resources,
17 base and one-time, used in fiscal year 2025 for the Housing Opportunity Grant
18 program be redesignated for the Vermont Homeless Emergency Assistance and
19 Responsive Transition to Housing Program pursuant to 33 V.S.A. chapter 22.

1 **Sec. 13. TRANSITION; HOUSING OPPORTUNITY GRANT PROGRAM**

2 As part of its fiscal year 2028 budget presentation, the Department for
3 Children and Families shall present a plan for transitioning Housing
4 Opportunity Grant Program funding and duties to the Vermont Homeless
5 Emergency Assistance and Responsive Transition to Housing Program
6 established in 33 V.S.A. chapter 22.

7 * * * Effective Dates * * *

8 **Sec. 14. EFFECTIVE DATES**

9 This act shall take effect on July 1, 2025, except that:

10 (1) Secs. 4 (Vermont Homeless Emergency Assistance and Responsive
11 Transition to Housing Program), 9 (designated agencies to provide mental and
12 development disability services), and 10 (community action agencies) shall
13 take effect on July 1, 2026;

14 (2) Sec. 5 (Vermont Homeless Emergency Assistance and Responsive
15 Transition to Housing Program) shall take effect on July 1, 2027; and

16 (3) Sec. 6 (reporting requirements) shall take effect on July 1, 2030.

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1 (Committee vote: _____)

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Senator _____

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FOR THE COMMITTEE