

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        (c) It is the intent of the General Assembly that the Vermont Homeless  
2        Emergency Assistance and Responsive Transition to Housing Program  
3        established in 33 V.S.A. chapter 22 replaces the provision of emergency  
4        housing through the General Assistance Program established in 33 V.S.A.  
5        chapter 21 beginning in fiscal year 2027 and the Housing Opportunity Grant  
6        Program beginning in fiscal year 2028.

7        \* \* \* Vermont Homeless Emergency Assistance and Responsive Transition to  
8        Housing Program; Effective July 1, 2025 \* \* \*

9        Sec. 3. 33 V.S.A. chapter 22 is added to read:

10        CHAPTER 22. VERMONT HOMELESS EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE  
11        AND RESPONSIVE TRANSITION TO HOUSING PROGRAM

12        § 2201. SHORT TITLE

13        The Program established in this chapter may be cited as “VHEARTH” or  
14        the “VHEARTH Program.”

15        § 2202. PURPOSE

16        It is the purpose of the General Assembly to:

17        (1) replace the provision of emergency housing through the General  
18        Assistance Program established in chapter 21 of this title and use funds and  
19        resources previously attributed to those programs, and any other identified  
20        State and federal monies, to fund the Vermont Homeless Emergency

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.



\* \* \* Designated Agencies \* \* \*

Sec. 9. 18 V.S.A. § 8907 is amended to read:

§ 8907. DESIGNATION OF AGENCIES TO PROVIDE MENTAL  
HEALTH AND DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITY SERVICES

(a) Except as otherwise provided in this chapter, the Commissioners of Mental Health and of Disabilities, Aging, and Independent Living shall, within the limits of funds designated by the General Assembly for this purpose, ensure that community services to persons with a mental condition or psychiatric disability and persons with a developmental disability throughout the State are provided through designated community mental health agencies, including community services to persons participating in the Vermont Homeless Emergency Assistance and Responsive Transition to Housing Program pursuant to 33 V.S.A. chapter 22. The Commissioners shall designate public or private nonprofit agencies to provide or arrange for the provision of these services.

(b) Within the limits of available resources, each designated community mental health or developmental disability agency shall plan, develop, and provide or otherwise arrange for those community mental health or developmental disability services that are not assigned by law to the exclusive jurisdiction of another agency and that are needed by and not otherwise available to persons with a mental condition or psychiatric disability or a

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           (5) to obtain prevention, intervention, treatment, and recovery services  
2     for ~~the prevention of narcotics addiction, alcoholism, and for the rehabilitation~~  
3     ~~of narcotic addicts and alcoholics~~ individuals with substance use disorder;

4           (6) to obtain emergency assistance through loans and grants to meet  
5     immediate and urgent individual and family needs, including the need for  
6     health services, nutritious food, housing, and unemployment-related assistance;

7           (7) to remove obstacles and solve personal and family problems ~~which~~  
8     that block achievement of self-sufficiency;

9           (8) to achieve greater participation in the affairs of the community;

10          (9) to make more frequent and effective use of other programs related to  
11     the purposes of this chapter; and

12          (10) to coordinate and establish linkages between governmental and  
13     other social service programs to ~~assure~~ ensure the effective delivery of such  
14     services to ~~low-income~~ persons; with low income and to encourage the use of  
15     entities in the private sector of the community in efforts to ameliorate poverty  
16     in the community.

17          (c) The Director is authorized to adopt rules pursuant to chapter 25 of this  
18     title appropriate to the carrying out of this chapter and the purposes thereof.

19     § 3903. DESIGNATION OF AGENCIES TO PROVIDE SERVICES AND

20                 ACTIVITIES TO AMELIORATE OR ELIMINATE POVERTY

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           serving 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 (Committee vote: \_\_\_\_\_)

2 \_\_\_\_\_

3 Senator \_\_\_\_\_

4 FOR THE COMMITTEE