



**To:** The Vermont Senate Committee on Health and Welfare

**From:** Angus Chaney, Executive Director, Homeless Prevention Center

**Date:** May 14, 2025

**Subject:** Suggested Edits to Bill H.91

Dear Chair Lyons, Vice-Chair Larocque Gulick, and Senators Cummings, Douglass, and Hart,

As you have heard, HOP is a high-performing program providing community-based shelter and services for Vermonters experiencing homelessness. HOP keeps emergency shelters open and staffed. It supports case managers working with people along a continuum from crisis, to emergency shelter, to permanent housing. While not the intent, language in H.91 has the potential to destabilize this network of integrated supports at a moment it needs to be strong.

H.91 appears to assume that G.A. activities and HOP activities can't be integrated at the client level unless they are administered from or through the same entity. This is untrue. Unlike earlier in the pandemic, there are systems and partnerships to support this at the client level, regardless of how funding flows. As a HOP-funded agency serving Rutland County, we serve many clients in G.A. motels, work with them to secure housing through HOP resources, and routinely connect them to longer-term supports they need beyond G.A. or HOP. This includes Family Supportive Housing, VHIP rental units through our local NeighborWorks partner, permanent supportive housing through our local housing trust, and rental subsidies through housing authorities. (The full list of connections we make would not fit on this page.) We also hold client financial assistance funds for the entire county, supporting not only clients of our origination with eviction prevention and re-housing, but clients of the local CAP agency, and other nonprofit organizations.

Rearranging HOP funding streams or administrative pass-through for VHEARTH will hurt, not help, integration at the client level. Already H.91 has stressed the HOP network between Community Action Agencies and other nonprofit shelter and service providers. We support the Legislature and our community partners in efforts to reimagine GA funding and how it is put to use. As service providers, we would like to be at that table. However, for this to work, the HOP program should be removed from H.91's concept for re-designing General Assistance.

Knowing the committee is eager to vote out a bill, we suggest the following changes to the language of H.91.



- Page 4, lines 9 and 10, strike: *“and the Housing Opportunity Grant Program beginning in fiscal year 2028.”*
- Page 20, lines 14-16, strike: *“and the Housing Opportunity Grant Program and use funds and resources previously attributed to those programs, and any other identified State and federal monies,”*
- Page 31, strike lines 9-19.

Rather than lock-in changes to the administration of the HOP program and risk damaging one of Vermont’s most effective and efficient programs that shelters and serves people experiencing homelessness, we suggest, instead, convening a study committee in the summer of 2027 to consider questions such as:

1. *Whether transitioning the Housing Opportunity Grant Program funding and duties to the Vermont Homeless Emergency Assistance and Responsive Transition to Housing Program would reduce administrative costs connected with administering the Housing Opportunity Grant Program;*
2. *Whether the Community Action Agencies would more effectively and efficiently administer the Housing Opportunity Grant Program;*
3. *How transitioning the Housing Opportunity Grant Program funding and duties to the Vermont Homeless Emergency Assistance and Responsive Transition to Housing Program would impact the ability of the Program to provide consistent and effective technical assistance and monitoring across all Vermont jurisdictions;*

This timeline would allow an opportunity for the CAPs to operate the GA portion of VHEARTH, for a full year so that administrative capacity, community coordination, and outcomes can be assessed.

We believe these suggestions represent a path forward through a transformation of the G.A. program that is less disruptive to people experiencing homelessness and the community-based organizations experienced in serving them.

Thank you,

*Angus P. Chaney*

Executive Director

56 Howe Street – Patch Place - Building A – Box 7 - Rutland, VT 05701  
Ph: 802-775-9286 ~ Fax: 802-775-7436 - [info@hpcvt.org](mailto:info@hpcvt.org) - hpcvt.org