

7 May 2025

Senate Committee on Health and Welfare
Vermont State House
115 State Street
Montpelier, VT 05633-5301



RE: H.91

Dear Committee Members:

I'm writing to you regarding H.91 and have cc'd Addison County Senators Hardy and Heffernan in this correspondence.

John Graham Housing & Services (JGHS) receives annual Housing Opportunity Program (HOP) funding. As a grantee with a longstanding, successful relationship with the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) and HOP, I am deeply troubled about H.91's stipulation to move HOP funding to local Community Action Programs (CAPs).

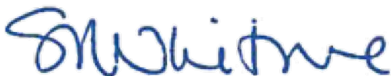
I believe that such a move, without a proper cost-benefit and service impact analysis, will result in a rushed systemic change that will cost our system of care more money and harm the people we serve—potentially increasing our unhoused population's dependence on the motel program and/or creating more unsheltered homelessness.

I know this is not the goal of H.91, and that the goal is to create more integration and a stronger system. However, without a proper study—with transparent input from all stakeholders who do the work (shelter providers), administer funds (OEO), and are impacted by services (people with lived experience)—this plan is guesswork.

As the language of this bill is being finalized, I respectfully request that a study committee with relevant stakeholders be set up to look at the question of whether to include HOP in this transition after the GA transition and after we know the impact of federal budget changes. This would afford the proposed systemic change the serious consideration it warrants.

While I understand the feeling of urgency when so many things are uncertain, I suggest we take the time to ensure the outcomes truly align with our values. Reactive decisions often create more problems than they solve. Please consider the proposal of a study committee before including HOP in the GA transition.

Very sincerely,



Susan Whitmore
Executive Director

cc: Senator Ruth Hardy and Senator Steven Heffernan

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