

TO: Senate Health & Welfare Committee
FROM: Alison Calderara, Capstone Community Action
on behalf of Vermont Community Action Partnership (VCAP)
RE: Request for additional HOP funding for Community Action Agencies
DATE: April 11, 2025

Good morning, my name is Alison Calderara from Capstone Community Action. I am testifying today on behalf of the Vermont Community Action Partnership, which includes all five of the community action agencies serving every county across our state. **We are requesting an additional \$6,025,000 designated to the Housing Opportunity Program under OEO – to be distributed to the 5 Community Action Agencies.** These are all critical dollars designed to reduce homelessness in our service areas.

The specific requests include:

\$2.4 million to stabilize families with an expansion of the proven success of The HOME Family Housing Voucher program.

- 155 Vermont families have benefited from the essential rental assistance necessary as they work toward housing stability and sustainability.
- These critical dollars will extend the current vouchers from 2 years to a maximum of 3 years, giving the families invaluable time to improve their economic situation and/or apply for permanent vouchers.
- It would also support vouchers for 50 additional families.
- To help put the need for these vouchers in context, there were 434 applications for these vouchers this past year.

\$2.3 million of this request will expand staffing in the housing navigation, case management and transitional housing support that is foundational to move unsheltered Vermonters to stable lives and permanent housing. This also includes an increase in the direct client assistance funds providing crucial homeless support such as security deposits and preventing evictions.

\$1.275 million of this request includes the extension of the ERAP funding for CVOEO and Capstone.

- These pandemic era one time funds have proven critical to meet the rapidly rising trend in unsheltered Vermonters during the pandemic years. While COVID abated, along with the funding, we are still left to face the crisis of homelessness.
- The end of this funding stream, slated for the end of June, will have a significant negative impact on our fight to reduce homelessness in three service regions across the state.
 - For my organization, Capstone, which serves Central Vermont, our Lamoille office in Morrisville will lose 44% of staff working with unsheltered or at-risk Vermonters. We will lose our Landlord Liaison position, that partners with private landlords to prevent evictions and expand rental units, our housing navigator providing services in the motels and another case manager helping clients retain their housing.
 - In Chittenden County, CVOEO will lose their funding for their Outreach Specialist, who conducts most of the CE Assessments in the county. He completed 95 Assessments in the last quarter, 185 in the last six months. At SEVCA, they will lose two family service support positions. These positions are critical “boots on the ground” jobs that we can’t afford to lose in the battle against homelessness.

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Thank you for your time and support for our important work for vulnerable Vermonters.