

March 13, 2025

Governor Phil Scott  
Office of Governor Phil Scott  
109 State Street, Pavilion  
Montpelier, VT 05609

Dear Governor Scott,

We are shelter and service providers, affordable housing providers and developers, first responders, educators, and those with interest from both the private and public sector from across Vermont who urge you to sign the FY25 Budget Adjustment Act (H.141) as passed by the legislature. This BAA includes three necessary tools for addressing Vermont's housing and homelessness crisis. Specifically, it would provide:

- \$1.84 million to extend the General Assistance emergency winter housing policy to June 30, 2025. It is currently set to expire on March 31, 2025.
- \$8.6 million for affordable housing production (via VHCB) to maintain the development and preservation of much needed affordable homes in Vermont.
- \$2.8 million for the final phase of the 2022 Developmental Disabilities Housing Initiative.

### **Extend the Emergency Winter Housing Policy**

The emergency winter housing policy ensures that unhoused people who the state has defined as vulnerable<sup>1</sup> can access emergency shelter through the General Assistance Emergency Housing Program (GA Program) between December 1, 2024 and March 31, 2025.<sup>2</sup> During the winter housing policy period, eligible Vermonters can access the GA Program regardless of caps that exist around access to the GA Program during non-emergency winter housing periods.<sup>3</sup> Without an extension of the emergency winter housing period, vulnerable households, including seniors, families with children, those with disabilities, and people who are pregnant, will lose access to the GA Program when the emergency winter housing policy expires in less than three weeks (on March 31, 2025).

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<sup>1</sup> Eligibility is limited to: (1) is 65 years of age or older; (2) has a disability that can be documented by: (A) receipt of Supplemental Security Income or Social Security Disability Insurance; or (B) a form developed by the Department as a means of documenting a qualifying disability or health condition that requires: (i) the applicant's name, date of birth, and the last four digits of the applicant's Social Security number or other identifying number; (ii) a description of the applicant's disability or health condition; (iii) a description of the risk posed to the applicant's health, safety, or welfare if temporary emergency housing is not authorized pursuant to this section; and (iv) a certification of a health care provider, as defined in 18 V.S.A. § 9481, that includes the provider's credentials, credential number, address, and phone number; (3) is a child 19 years of age or under; (4) is pregnant; (5) has experienced the death of a spouse, domestic partner, or minor child that caused the household to lose its housing; (6) has experienced a natural disaster, such as a flood, fire, or hurricane; (7) is under a court-ordered eviction or constructive eviction due to circumstances over which the household has no control; or (8) is experiencing domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, human trafficking, hate violence, or other dangerous or life threatening conditions that relate to violence against the individual or a household member that caused the household to lose its housing.

<sup>2</sup> Act 113, Sec. E.32, (b)(3).

<sup>3</sup> See, Act 113, Sec. E.32, (b)(1-2).

This is not a theoretical problem. Between September 15 and November 30, 2024, 1,052 of Vermont's most vulnerable households, including seniors, families with children, those with disabilities, and people who are pregnant, lost their shelter through the state's GA Program.<sup>4</sup> As we wrote to you last fall,<sup>5</sup> during this time we were at the point of giving tents to families with young children and triaging cases to focus on keeping people literally alive. Without your support for extending the Emergency Winter Housing Policy in the BAA, we will see these unconscionable human harms return to Vermont on April 1.

The urgency of this matter cannot be overstated. Vermont has no plan or capacity to shelter these vulnerable Vermonters if they are evicted. Vermont's current statewide shelter capacity is 631 households, and all are already full.<sup>6</sup> There are 1,424 vulnerable households, including 1,789 adults and 479 children, currently sheltered through the GA Program.<sup>7</sup> Because Vermont is a shelter first state, the vulnerable households sheltered through the GA Program are in addition to the state's 631 household shelter capacity.

Among those 1,424 vulnerable households, there are 453 vulnerable households, including 588 adults and 161 children, who have already used their maximum 80 nights and will lose access to the GA Program when the emergency winter housing policy expires in less than three weeks.<sup>8</sup> And, that number will continue to increase as more vulnerable Vermonters reach their 80 night cap. Without this extension of the General Assistance emergency winter housing policy, there will literally be no safe place for potentially thousands of vulnerable Vermonters - including seniors, families with children, those with disabilities, and people who are pregnant - to go.

### **Provide Funding for Affordable Housing Production (via VHCB)**

The underlying cause of Vermont's housing and homelessness crisis is the severe shortage of homes affordable to people with the lowest incomes<sup>9</sup> and a widening gap between incomes and housing costs.<sup>10</sup> According to the 2024 Vermont Housing Needs Assessment, Vermont needs 24,000 – 36,000 additional year-round homes by 2029 “to meet demand, normalize vacancy rates, house the homeless and replace homes lost from the stock through flooding and other

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<sup>4</sup> Vermont Dept. of Children and Families, January 31st Housing Report, p. 6, Jan. 31, 2025, available at <https://legislature.vermont.gov/assets/Legislative-Reports/Act-113-Monthly-Housing-Report-01.31.2025.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> Provider Ltr. To Gov. Scott, Sept. 25, 2024, available at <https://helpingtohousevt.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/Provider-Letter-to-Governor-Scott-re-GA.pdf>.

<sup>6</sup> Vermont Dept. of Children and Families, February 28 Housing Report, p. 13, Feb. 26, 2025, available at <https://legislature.vermont.gov/assets/Legislative-Reports/Act-113-Monthly-Housing-Reporting-2.28.2025.pdf>.

<sup>7</sup> Agency of Human Services, Department for Children and Families, GA Emergency Housing Program as of March 10, 2025, available at <https://dcf.vermont.gov/Addressing-and-Preventing-Unsheltered-Homelessness>.

<sup>8</sup> Vermont Dept. of Children and Families, February 28 Housing Report, p. 7, Feb. 26, 2025, available at <https://legislature.vermont.gov/assets/Legislative-Reports/Act-113-Monthly-Housing-Reporting-2.28.2025.pdf>. This number will also likely increase as more individuals would reach their maximum eligible days in the GA program after the emergency winter housing policy expires.

<sup>9</sup> National Low Income Housing Coalition, No State Has an Adequate Supply of Affordable Rental Housing for the Lowest-Income Renters, available at <https://nlihc.org/gap>.

<sup>10</sup> National Low Income Housing Coalition, How Much Do You Need to Earn to Afford a Modest Apartment in Your State?, available at <https://nlihc.org/oor>.

causes.”<sup>11</sup> This includes 3,295 homes to address homelessness and 3,957 homes to normalize vacancy rates.<sup>12</sup> To solve this crisis, Vermont must continue investments in its affordable housing development pipeline.

The Vermont Housing and Conservation Board (VHCB) estimates that it will receive approximately \$50 million in project requests during the remainder of FY25. Without this additional \$8.6 million in funding provided through the BAA, we will see a decrease in the development and preservation of much needed affordable homes in Vermont.

### **Provide Funding for the Developmental Disabilities Housing Initiative**

Vermont established the Developmental Disabilities Housing Initiative in 2022 and awarded three planning grants to develop supportive housing models for adults who have an intellectual and/or developmental disability diagnosis. Two of the projects are underway and being built. The third project, which would create housing for 10 residents who can live semi-independently, has a \$2.8 million gap in funding. This requested appropriation would ensure that Vermont follows through after the planning grants. The Champlain Housing Trust is assembling a financing package with several sources, but still has a gap. Including this amount in the BAA could help get the development of this needed housing going by this summer.

Thank you for your consideration of our urgent request.

Sincerely,

Kirsten Murphy  
Executive Director  
Vermont Developmental Disabilities Council  
Serving Statewide

Ken Russell  
Executive Director  
Another Way, Inc.  
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<sup>11</sup> Vermont Department of Housing and Community Development, Vermont Housing Needs Assessment: 2025-2029, June 2024, p. 6, available at [https://outside.vermont.gov/agency/ACCD/ACCD\\_Web\\_Docs/Housing/Housing-Needs-Assessment/2025-2029/VT-HNA-2025.pdf](https://outside.vermont.gov/agency/ACCD/ACCD_Web_Docs/Housing/Housing-Needs-Assessment/2025-2029/VT-HNA-2025.pdf).

<sup>12</sup> Vermont Department of Housing and Community Development, Vermont Housing Needs Assessment: 2025-2029, June 2024, p. 6, available at [https://outside.vermont.gov/agency/ACCD/ACCD\\_Web\\_Docs/Housing/Housing-Needs-Assessment/2025-2029/VT-HNA-2025.pdf](https://outside.vermont.gov/agency/ACCD/ACCD_Web_Docs/Housing/Housing-Needs-Assessment/2025-2029/VT-HNA-2025.pdf).

*Provider Letter to Governor Scott*

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*Provider Letter to Governor Scott*

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