

April 23, 2025

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

Dear Governor Scott,

We need your help, your leadership, and your compassion. We are shelter and service providers from across Vermont who are witnessing the unconscionable harms that were created when the General Assistance Emergency Housing Program (GA Program) winter weather protections ended on March 31. As our state's shelter and service system was already beyond capacity before this latest crisis, we are again sending children and vulnerable adults into the streets and woods to live. While we appreciate your Executive Order No. 03-25, it still leaves hundreds of our most vulnerable unhoused neighbors out on the street, including seniors, people with disabilities, and people fleeing domestic violence.

This is a humanitarian crisis and requires immediate action by the state. As Vermont's Governor, you have unique powers that can be immediately tapped to address this crisis. As such, we call on you to immediately:

- Use your power under the state's emergency management provisions to proclaim a state of emergency and provide within each region of the state 24-hour, trauma-informed, safe, accessible, stable, and non-congregate emergency shelter for vulnerable Vermonters who have become or will become unsheltered because of the end of the winter weather protections; or
- Direct the Vermont Agency of Human Services to exercise existing authority and spending capacity within the Vermont Agency of Human Services to provide within each region of the state 24-hour, trauma-informed, safe, accessible, stable, and non-congregate emergency shelter for vulnerable Vermonters who have become or will become unsheltered because of the end of the winter weather protections.

While it remains unclear precisely how many households your Executive Order will protect, the Executive Order does not remove the 1,100-night room cap¹ that came back into effect when the winter weather protections ended on March 31. According to the state's most recent data, there were just 1,096 households in the GA Program on April 21, 2025,² down substantially from the 1,415 households

¹ Act 113, Sec. E.32, (b)(2).

² Vermont Dept. of Children and Families, GA Emergency Housing Program, Household Information by Eligibility Category as of April 21, 2025, available at <https://dcf.vermont.gov/Addressing-and-Preventing-Unsheltered-Homelessness>.

in the GA Program on March 31, 2025,³ immediately prior to the end of the winter weather protections period.

This mass unsheltering is happening on top of a shelter system that is already over capacity. There is currently a statewide shelter capacity for 655 households, and all are full.⁴ The hundreds of households who lost their shelter on April 1 and the many more who will lose shelter as they reach their 80 day limit this spring are in addition to the state's 655 household shelter capacity.

In addition to the immediate steps outlined above, we also urge you to support investments in and long-term solutions to Vermont's housing and homelessness crisis.

Vermont's homelessness crisis surpassed another record last year. According to the 2024 PIT count, there were 3,458 unhoused Vermonters in a single night, including 737 children and 646 Vermonters 55 years old or older.⁵ This number represents a five percent increase over Vermont's previous record year in 2023.⁶ To make matters worse, Black Vermonters were 5.6 times more likely than white Vermonters to be unhoused last year.⁷ And, Vermont's PIT count numbers are an undercount, as they reflect only the people who engaged with our state's dedicated and perpetually under-resourced shelter and service providers on the PIT count day.

The underlying cause of Vermont's housing and homelessness crisis is the severe shortage of homes affordable to people with the lowest incomes⁸ and a widening gap between incomes and housing costs.⁹ To solve this crisis, Vermont must make sustained, long-term investments across all areas that have contributed to Vermont's housing and homelessness crisis, including funding to construct new permanently affordable housing, rehabilitate existing structures into affordable housing, increase middle-income home ownership, and more.

Vermont must also invest in proven solutions to homelessness: providing individuals with immediate access to housing and voluntary supportive services. Research irrefutably shows that providing stable,

³ Vermont Dept. of Children and Families, GA Emergency Housing Program, Household Information by Eligibility Category as of March 31, 2025, available at

<https://outside.vermont.gov/dept/DCF/Shared%20Documents/ESD/GA/GA-Data/GA-Data-04-08-25.pdf>.

⁴ See., Vermont Dept. of Children and Families, March 31st Housing Report, p. 13, Mar. 25, 2025, available at

<https://legislature.vermont.gov/assets/Legislative-Reports/Act-113-Monthly-Housing-Reporting-3.31.2025.pdf>.

⁵ HHAV, et. al., 2024 Vermont's Annual Point-in-Time Count, June 2024, available at

<https://helpingtohousevt.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/2024-PIT-Report-final.pdf>.

⁶ HHAV, et. al., 2024 Vermont's Annual Point-in-Time Count, June 2024, available at

<https://helpingtohousevt.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/2024-PIT-Report-final.pdf>.

⁷ There were 2,904 white people unhoused and 254 Black people unhoused. The total state population (according to U.S. Census) for White people is 577,751 and is 9,034 for Black people. The ratio for white is 1 in 198.95 people and Black is 1 in 35.56 people. See, HHAV, et. al., 2024 Vermont's Annual Point-in-Time Count, June 2024, available at <https://helpingtohousevt.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/2024-PIT-Report-final.pdf>.

⁸ 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>.

⁹ 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>.

affordable, accessible housing and voluntary supportive services is the most effective approach for ending homelessness.¹⁰

Thank you for your consideration of our urgent request.

Sincerely,

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¹⁰ National Low Income Housing Coalition, The Evidence is Clear: Housing First Works, available at <https://nlihc.org/sites/default/files/Housing-First-Evidence.pdf>.

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