



STATE OF VERMONT
GENERAL ASSEMBLY
LEGISLATIVE JOINT FISCAL COMMITTEE

To: Josh Hanford, Commissioner, Department of Housing & Community Development
From: Senator Jane Kitchel, Chair, Joint Fiscal Committee
CC: Kristin Clouser, Secretary, Agency of Administration
Lindsay Kurrle, Secretary, Agency of Commerce & Community Development
Jenney Samuelson, Secretary, Agency of Human Services
Date: July 6, 2023
Subject: Act 81 – Information Request – Emergency Housing Transition Program

I am writing as Chair of the Joint Fiscal Committee which, under Act 81, is charged with the oversight of the Emergency Housing Transition Program. At the next meeting of the Joint Fiscal Committee scheduled for July 31, we are looking forward to our first update on the Administration's efforts to move about 1,200 households from motel/ hotel housing.

In the negotiations with the Administration on this legislation, we agreed to several of the Administration's proposals that were included in the bill. The Committee would like to be provided with more detailed data and analyses behind these proposals. Specifically, I am requesting information on how ACCD will support VHCB in implementing the following statutory provisions of the Act:

- Sec. 9 (a) (1) – Act 81 includes \$10 million to support the capacity, availability, and utilization of manufactured homes in cooperatively owned, nonprofit, and privately owned manufactured home parks with vacant and available lots.

During FY 2023 BAA discussions, we heard testimony that while there were vacant lots, many of them could not be used because of limited water/sewer infrastructure or location. Since VHCB can fund this type of housing within its existing appropriation, we did not feel at that time it was necessary to carve out a specific allocation for this type of housing. Please provide us with an inventory of vacant lots suitable for rehousing individuals exiting homelessness, including what rental subsidy, services and public transportation options are available to ensure that these households will be successfully rehoused in Vermont's manufactured home communities. Additionally, we will look to VHCB and DHCD to provide additional detail about how the state's investments in private parks will result in permanently affordable homes as the program develops.

- Sec. 9 (a) (2) - Act 81 includes \$4 million to be granted from VHCB to the Vermont State Housing Authority for the Manufactured Home Improvement and Repair Program. Please provide a description of the need, including the estimated number of homeowners to be served and past sources and levels of funding for this program.

- Sec. 9 (a) (3) - Please provide information about DHCD's plan to support the Vermont Housing Improvement Program (VHIP). How will the \$5 million granted from VHCB to DHCD in this Act be deployed? By specific city or town? By priority households? Is there a waiting list of interested property owners that exceed the level of funding previously appropriated? What will be the verification process that assures these units are going to households currently in motels/hotels. In my district, I understand that some VHIP funded apartments have rejected households exiting homelessness because they lack rental assistance. Is there a gap in availability of rental assistance that will preclude success and how large is it? Will the Department be proposing changes to this program?
- Sec. 9 (b) – Act 81 increases VHCB's "Homeless Unit" set aside from 15 to 30 percent with priority given to households exiting hotels and motels in accordance with this Act.

Since FY 2024 projects coming online already have legal agreements in place that determine the populations to be served, it appears that despite everyone's best efforts, this target might not be achieved within the April 1, 2024 timeframe to end the pandemic-era General Assistance Emergency Housing Program. I understand that increasing the number of units available to households exiting homelessness beyond the set-aside in existing agreements must be treated as a goal and requires the availability of rental subsidy and services. Please clarify how you intend to help VHCB's housing partners meet the 30 percent goal by supporting the availability of rental assistance and services.

The Joint Fiscal Committee takes this oversight responsibility very seriously and appreciates the important work ahead. It would be greatly appreciated if you would provide the requested information for the July 31 meeting.