



STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

CHRISTOPHER T. SUNUNU
Governor

November 18, 2020

Mayors of New Hampshire,

Thank you very much for your letter from November 5 regarding the challenge of homelessness in New Hampshire. Like all of you, this issue has and will continue to be a priority of my administration.

Our focus on homelessness is not new and our philosophy is consistent: housing is not an optional lifestyle commodity, but rather, is an irreplaceable requirement for any form of humane human condition. Housing stability is a key social determinant of health and is essential for all children, adults and families to thrive in New Hampshire. Therefore, my administration enthusiastically welcomes your willingness to partner with the state to create broad, integrated, and innovative approaches to address and prevent homelessness.

As we look to take future action to reform our systems, it is important to properly inventory the financial support and resources that the state is providing to your communities, as well as the dedicated providers who are working hard to make a positive difference in the lives of individuals across our state.

The following state funding, shown on a county by county basis, represents the resources that the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and the federal government have provided over the last four years either directly or through contracts with local providers to assist individuals or families experiencing homelessness. Specifically, this funding flows from the Bureau of Housing Supports within DHHS.

Belknap County:

| | |
|----------------------------|-----------|
| State General Funds: | \$513,488 |
| Continuum of Care Funds: | \$585,257 |
| Emergency Solutions Grant: | \$146,000 |

Total Funds: \$1,244,745

Merrimack County:

| | |
|--|-------------|
| State General Funds: | \$2,274,811 |
| Continuum of Care Funds: | \$1,764,329 |
| Emergency Solutions Grant: | \$1,248,616 |
| Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS: | \$1,361,859 |

| | |
|--|-------------|
| Projects for Assistance in Transition from Homelessness: | \$152,936 |
| Total Funds: | \$6,802,551 |

Rockingham County:

| | |
|--|-------------|
| State General Funds: | \$1,368,592 |
| Continuum of Care Funds: | \$5,448,134 |
| Emergency Solutions Grant: | \$439,400 |
| Projects for Assistance in Transition from Homelessness: | \$305,872 |
| Total Funds: | \$7,561,998 |

Strafford County:

| | |
|----------------------------|-------------|
| State General Funds: | \$854,531 |
| Continuum of Care Funds: | \$856,840 |
| Emergency Solutions Grant: | \$1,031,016 |
| Total Funds: | \$2,742,387 |

Hillsborough County:

| | |
|--|--------------|
| State General Funds: | \$7,018,993 |
| Emergency Solutions Grant: | \$4,260,010 |
| Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS: | \$1,048,079 |
| Projects for Assistance in Transition from Homelessness: | \$350,504 |
| Total Funds: | \$12,677,586 |

North Country (Carroll, Coos, Grafton):

| | |
|--|-------------|
| State General Funds: | \$1,300,289 |
| Continuum of Care Funds: | \$799,704 |
| Emergency Solutions Grant: | \$829,196 |
| Projects for Assistance in Transition from Homelessness: | \$209,488 |
| Total Funds: | \$3,138,677 |

Cheshire & Sullivan Counties:

| | |
|--|-------------|
| State General Funds: | \$1,690,787 |
| Continuum of Care Funds: | \$3,142,691 |
| Emergency Solutions Grant: | \$1,247,304 |
| Projects for Assistance in Transition from Homelessness: | \$133,200 |
| Total Funds: | \$6,153,982 |

Please note, the above investments exclude the funding through other contracts within DHHS that touch the same populations for other related services beyond their housing-specific needs. How the funds above are deployed can vary from community to community and county to county. Each community takes local ownership on how to best deploy these funds based on community needs assessments, provider capacity, availability of local resources and other regional nuances. However, regardless of how the funds are ultimately deployed, communities report highest levels of success when local providers demonstrate effective collaboration with a focus on housing first. As an example, in Manchester the breakdown is as follows:

In the FY 20/2021 budget, the state provided Manchester with the following:

Specific for the City of Manchester:

- \$2,107,501 to support homeless shelter services.
- \$479,452 for Housing Opportunities for People with AIDS.
- \$796,721 to provide quarantine services for individuals experiencing homelessness in Manchester, and outreach to homeless encampments in Manchester.

The following are for the greater Manchester area, with providers who operate out of Manchester:

- \$448,674 to support homeless prevention and rapid rehousing services through the annual Emergency Solutions Grant.
- \$87,802 for Projects for Assistance in Transition from Homelessness (PATH) outreach.
- \$114,284 for security deposit and first month rent assistance.

In FY 2021, the following additional dollars were added to serve residents from the City of Manchester:

Manchester Only:

- \$1,082,600 in Emergency Solutions Grant CARES Act funds for emergency shelter services and operations
- \$81,795 in HOPWA CARES Act funding.

Greater Manchester with providers who operate out of Manchester:

- \$214,285 for eviction prevention
- \$500,000 in Emergency Solutions Grant CARES Act funds for homeless prevention and rapid rehousing services.
- \$1,092,314 in Emergency Solutions Grant CARES Act funds for street outreach.

In 2017-2019 Manchester received \$5,749,156 from the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services for housing supports.

Additionally, the State has \$20 million in CARES Act funding for housing relief to prevent evictions and \$15 million CARES Act Safer Spaces Shelter Modification program available to assist you. Furthermore, \$32 million in CARES Act funding has been distributed to cities and towns to broadly address increased expenditures during the public health emergency.

Two success stories to highlight are the Bridge House in Plymouth, which utilized their CARES Act Safer Spaces Shelter Modification funds to work the New Hampshire Housing Finance Authority to expand transitional housing. In Nashua, Family Promise leveraged \$2.7 million to accelerate a housing project that will bring 25 new beds into the city to assist families experiencing homelessness.

We share this information with you to help provide a more complete understanding of the funding situation and to demonstrate the commitment the state has made on this issue.

Beyond this, we appreciate homelessness is a complex issue that requires us to consider an individual's entire background and profile, all of which has a direct impact on each's current and potential housing stability. Often, homelessness is the result of an underlying behavioral health condition or co-occurring disorders. In order to effectively manage this dynamic, the state has made historic investments in our mental health services, substance use disorder (SUD) treatment options and a wide array of social services. In doing so, we strive to ensure that individuals, whether they are accessing housing supports at the local, state or federal level, have the access they need to wraparound services to address the underlying cause(s) of their homelessness.

Several noteworthy investments in these areas include:

- \$86,000,000 for The Doorway program, to establish a regional, state-wide network for individuals to access SUD services.
- \$8,750,000 for new Secure Psychiatric Unit to expand beds for individuals requiring voluntary or involuntary admission to mental health services.
- \$5,000,000 for mental health transitional housing beds.
- \$1,708,000 for increased Medicaid provider rates for designated receiving facility beds, to ensure sufficient capacity and workforce for a wide array of social services.

New Hampshire is also leading work to solve the cliff effect, which keeps far too many people in poverty and on the brink of homelessness because a small increase in their income earnings can result in devastating loss of their critical benefits. In New Hampshire, DHHS and NHES are working together to solve this, in a way no other state is, by closely working with national experts, the state is undertaking an economic analysis that crosses the social determinates of health, the business climate, and benefits to determine what policy levers are needed to solve this complex issue. This will have a direct impact on the future workforce for New Hampshire and stability for individuals and families in many areas, including housing and child care.

Despite these investments, we know it is a moral imperative, especially in the time of this pandemic, that we do more. Therefore, I am pleased to share the state will be taking the

following actions in the coming days. First, we have rebuilt and retooled New Hampshire's Interagency Council on Homelessness (ICH). While the current group has accomplished much, its mission must now be refocused and expanded. Reforms to the ICH Executive Order have been made and are in effect presently.

Additionally, we have expanded the diversity of its membership to ensure it includes all critical perspectives. This includes municipal representatives *and* individuals who have themselves been homeless at some point in their lives. DHHS has provided me with names of additional members and some of those appointments will be in place for their first meeting.

I have tasked the new ICH to update New Hampshire's statewide homelessness plan. As you know, this plan has not been updated since 2006 and it is well past time for this. I have asked the new ICH to begin its critical work immediately in order to submit a preliminary plan to me by December 14, 2020. This timeline is ambitious but necessary to ensure that the next legislature has sufficient time to consider its recommendations as we craft the next state budget.

As we look to the New Year, it is imperative you make your voices heard with the new, incoming legislature. Their input and investment will be important as we consider where investments must be made and precisely how the system should be reformed to produce better outcomes, especially for the individuals at the center of our work. It will be incumbent on the next legislature to determine what state resources are available to provide financial support for municipal sheltering plans and additional support for emergency shelter beds, which are specific requests that you highlighted. Additionally, they will be essential in determining the proper funding for the entire continuum of housing, including affordable housing and transitional housing.

One area where your support is going to be vital is the passage of my bipartisan housing reform package. It is undeniable that a cornerstone of our efforts to end homelessness is to increase New Hampshire's housing stock. This proposal was on a path to passage earlier this year but was upended in the legislative process due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

My proposal will:

- Enhance local control;
- Improve zoning process predictability;
- Accelerate investment in housing by expanding the use of Tax Increment Finance Districts and Community Revitalization Tax Relief Programs to create more workforce housing.

We know that access to affordable housing can help reduce homelessness and create stability for children, adults, families, businesses and communities. This legislation will provide us with a significant asset to combat homelessness and I need your support to help us get it over the finish line. We know that with affordable and available housing across the state, we can make real progress in combating homelessness.

Finally, it is important we recognize that there is no quick fix to addressing homelessness. The predominant reason I am so enthusiastic to receive your letter is because it is going to take all of us working together at the local, state and federal levels. This must also include a renewed dedication to communicating, coordinating and forming a productive relationship with the local service and housing providers in your communities. In some communities, cities have partnered with nonprofits to meet unmet needs and in others cities and towns have come together to solve community-wide problems related to housing. This level of collaboration has leveraged state, federal, and local resources for promising outcomes. Any attempt to politicize, scapegoat, or otherwise undermine efforts to help individuals and families who are experiencing homelessness is reprehensible and will not be tolerated.

We must maintain our vigilance to collectively govern as we work to end homelessness in New Hampshire. I look forward to your partnership.

Sincerely,



Christopher T. Sununu
Governor