



**STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE**  
**OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR**

CHRISTOPHER T. SUNUNU  
Governor

January 17, 2023

Dear Mayors,

Thank you for your letter dated January 3, 2023, regarding the issue of homelessness in the State of New Hampshire. The state has always and will continue to be open to meaningful collaboration on this issue with your cities and other municipalities across the state. However, politically motivated letters merely muddy the water and make that mutual goal of collaboration more difficult to achieve.

Despite that fact, a date and time has been identified for my team at the Department of Health and Human Services, Governor's Office staff, the Mayors, as well as key legislators to meet and explore avenues for further collaboration on homelessness.

The State of New Hampshire takes homelessness seriously and has taken unprecedented steps to address the issue head-on. While the state plays a critical role in addressing this crisis, local communities share this responsibility and are also accountable for addressing the unique needs in their communities. While your letter falsely charges that New Hampshire does not address homelessness utilizing the "Housing First" model, I can confidently say all programs funded by the Department of Health and Human Services are required to follow the Housing First model.

**Continuums of Care:**

It is important to note that the State of NH has three Continuums of Care (CoC's) that together are responsible for promoting community-wide planning and strategic use of resources to address homelessness; improving coordination and integration with mainstream resources and other programs targeted to people experiencing homelessness; improving data collection and performance measurement; and allowing each community to tailor its programs to the particular strengths and challenges in assisting homeless individuals and families within that community. CoC's are funded directly from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and require representatives of relevant organizations (e.g., nonprofit organizations, victim services providers, local governments) to form a Continuum of Care to serve a specific geographic area. Each CoC provides services and resources as outlined in their plan to HUD for their geographic area.

In New Hampshire, there are three Continuums of Care:

**107 North Main Street, State House - Rm 208, Concord, New Hampshire 03301**  
**Telephone (603) 271-2121 • FAX (603) 271-7640**  
**Website: <http://www.governor.nh.gov/> • Email: [governorsununu@nh.gov](mailto:governorsununu@nh.gov)**  
**TDD Access: Relay NH 1-800-735-2964**

- Manchester – the Collaborative Applicant is Families in Transition and covers the City of Manchester;
- Greater Nashua – the Collaborative Applicant is Harbor Care, and covers the City of Nashua and the following towns: Amherst, Brookline, Hollis, Hudson, Litchfield, Mason, Merrimack, Milford, and Mont Vernon; and
- Balance of State – the Collaborative Applicant is the Bureau of Housing Supports (BHS) and covers the cities and towns not covered by the other two CoC's

**We would welcome the opportunity to discuss better ways to align the work of the three CoC's, up to and including merging and forming one CoC for the state in an effort to meet statewide needs.**

### State-Local Partnerships:

The Department of Health and Human Services works closely with all of the providers in all of the local communities, including attending local meetings whenever possible. These meetings are the ideal opportunity for municipalities to join with the state and local partners to work on solutions.

Additionally, I established the Council on Housing Stability through executive action in 2020 and it was codified by the legislature in 2022. The Council was charged with making and implementing a plan to create housing stability for all citizens, including a plan for those experiencing homelessness.

In accordance with the Executive Order, the Council submitted an initial plan in December 2020 to set a strategy for the first six months of the work. This initial plan set out to 1) create a plan for housing stability for New Hampshire citizens and 2) develop a comprehensive update to the State's plan on homelessness.

In June 2021, the three-year strategic plan was completed. The Council is now working on implementing the plan, which has two primary goals; to increase housing availability critical for New Hampshire's future and have homelessness be rare, brief and one-time.

In furtherance of those goals, the council has been working in collaboration with municipalities on the following:

- Increasing collaboration among the three Continuums of Care (CoC) to align processes and establishing case conferencing to ensure consistency and access to services across the state;
- Developing workflow and operational policies to support homelessness prevention. Piloting strategies with Keene, Lebanon and Rochester City Welfare and community mapping in Laconia;
- The Regional Housing Needs Assessment is underway and will be completed in March 2023;

- Expansion of the Landlord Incentive Program – this program was expanded from January to September 2022 and placed 57 households in permanent housing during that period, helping 102 individuals transition from homelessness or temporary housing. The program was renewed and will continue operating until at least mid-2023, expanding to Concord and Laconia. It also provides technical assistance to communities and advances goals of the Council on Housing Stability by advancing community mapping, training, and coordination to create long-term statewide solutions.

### **Unprecedented State Financial Investments:**

In 2022 alone, the State of New Hampshire made several unprecedented investments toward housing, including:

- \$100 million for InvestNH to make rapid investments in more affordable housing
- \$20 million for families in crisis through this winter
- \$4 million to build statewide healthcare access for individuals experiencing homelessness
- \$4 million for emergency shelter bed capacity and expansion in addition to our typical \$2.9 million annual general fund appropriation
- \$2.25 million for the landlord incentive program
- \$1 million for winter warming shelters

The InvestNH initiatives are important pieces to the solution and will have a direct positive impact on affordable housing stock in the state. Of 1,472 units being built from the initial \$60 million under InvestNH, 591(40%) are being built to increase housing stock in your cities, and the average affordability commitment is 31 years under the program.

Importantly, there are several proposals in the legislature that prioritize affordable housing. The State Senate is slated to consider a proposal to provide additional funding to programs that facilitate the construction of affordable housing as well as provide new ongoing investments and appropriations to help address the issue. I will be supporting those efforts and hope they see their way to my desk for signature.

### **Mayors' Requests:**

#### ***A Statewide Increase in Emergency Shelter Beds:***

Traditionally, the Department of Health and Human Services has funded more than 700 emergency shelter beds annually, as well as 182 transitional beds. These are in addition to the 250 beds that are funded through other sources.

As referenced above, \$4 million was added to existing homeless shelters under contract with the Department of Health and Human Services for COVID-19 related/impacted costs. Funds were distributed across shelters currently on contract with DHHS, accounting for the known number of beds at each facility.

In December 2022, ten new contracts were approved, totaling \$1 million, for one-time grants to one vendor in each county for the operation of cold weather shelters or other non-traditional cold weather response. These funds can be used to cover:

- The operational costs of a physical cold weather shelter
- Hotel stays for individuals/families experiencing unsheltered homelessness who cannot otherwise stay in an emergency shelter (often due to lack of available space)
- The purchase of cold weather supplies for individuals who do not accept shelter referrals, or for other community specific responses to homelessness in cold weather

Importantly, this funding allows communities to expand, not replace, what they currently do to support individuals and families experiencing homelessness. This unprecedented support has established an additional 348 beds statewide to support the needs of individuals experiencing homelessness.

Moreover, the request to call in the National Guard when all funding avenues haven't been exhausted is extremely irresponsible and troubling. Collectively, your cities received more than \$73 million from the American Rescue Plan and Coronavirus Relief Funds that can directly be used on housing, homelessness, and lower income families. According to public reports as of the Quarter 3 of 2022, some of your cities have only spent a small portion of your allocations. The \$73 million figure excludes the \$137 million in emergency rental assistance provided to households in your municipalities that had a direct impact on housing and lower income families. It also excludes the hundreds of millions of dollars the state put forward in other investments that could have an indirect impact on municipal budgets or impact housing, lower income families, or homelessness more generally in your communities. Supportive services have also been funded with the New Hampshire Housing Finance Authority and the Community Action Partnerships through mid-2023 to help households in need connect to available services and resources.

***Additional Shelter for Women:***

The state contracts with providers who are on-the-ground every day offering services to homeless individuals. Even if the Families in Transition Emergency Shelter or other shelters are full, there are other resources that these providers will help individuals navigate to receive the services they need.

Regarding your request to use the Tirrell House, your letter was the first time I received that request. The state is moving quickly to accommodate your request and could have an actionable agreement to allow the City of Manchester to use the property ready for the Governor and Executive Council's consideration as early as January 18, 2023.

***Provide Medical Respite Care:***

As referenced above, the state will use one-time Home and Community Services investment funds to prioritize \$4 million to expand the Healthcare for Homeless model statewide. A transfer of funds to support a Health and Human Services position to lead this initiative has already been

planned for the next Joint Legislative Fiscal Committee meeting. I encourage your communities to support this initiative when it comes up.

***Additional Shelter and Resources for Homeless Youth:***

In relation to Stepping Stones, it should be noted that the Greater Nashua CoC did not apply for Youth Homeless Demonstration Funds, which could have been used to supplement youth services in the city. As mentioned before, municipalities bear some responsibility to solve these challenging issues and should apply for funds when available.

The state will soon be launching the next round of the Youth Residential Facility Improvement Program, providing up to \$5 million for infrastructure projects at these facilities. Eligibility will include youth and young adult shelters, as approved by the Governor and Executive Council in September 2022. Moreover, the state is exploring the possibility of providing state funding to family resource centers to provide supports to families in times of crisis.

The State and all involved agencies have been dedicating financial and technical resources to this problem in a substantial way. We continue to focus on collaborative partnerships across the universe of organizations and municipal governments in responding to this crisis. The state has always and will continue to be open to further collaboration with your cities.

Sincerely,



Christopher T. Sununu  
Governor