

MEMORANDUM

To: Molly Gray, Lieutenant Governor

Fr: Jahnessa Ryea

Re: Homelessness Awareness Day and Memorial Vigil

Date: 22 January 2021

Background:

January 27, 2021. 9am-2pm.

Organization: Vermont Affordable Housing Coalition. VAHC's mission is to **ensure** housing for Vermonters (primarily low-income, disabled, elderly, homeless or families with children), **encourage** residential control over housing, **advocate for preservation** of existing structures (ie: weatherization assistance via CVOEO), **promote** housing as a basic human right, and **act** as innovators to develop new affordable housing structures.

Event: Homelessness Awareness Day and Memorial Vigil: an annual event of concerned citizens, Vermonters who have or are currently experiencing homelessness, and housing service providers that seek to influence their legislators to help put an end to homelessness in Vermont. The Vermont Affordable Housing Coalition is an organization that fights daily for the basic human right of housing for Vermonters.

LT. Gov. Has been asked to say some brief remarks regarding homelessness' impact by the COVID-19 pandemic, and how we can continue to keep homeless Vermonters housed safely. Additionally, LT. Gov. Should touch on the goal of moving all Vermonters towards safe and affordable permanent housing.

Speaking Order/Attendees:

Elected Officials will be speaking from 12-12:30. Molly speaks first

12:00 YOU give remarks

Suggested Speaking Points:

Introduction:

- I would like to thank Erhard Mahnke and the Vermont Affordable Housing Coalition for the opportunity to speak today.
- I am honored to be joined by members of the Vermont Coalition to End Homelessness, Vermont Affordable Housing Coalition, and Chittenden County Homeless Alliance, Governor Phil Scott, and all of those who have chosen to be advocates and join us today.

Taking Stock: To effectively understand the current housing crisis caused by the Covid-19 Pandemic, we must acknowledge statistics from this past year and what it has taught us.

- In September of 2020, Vermont put up 1,088 households (1288 adults and 307 children) up in hotels around the state using federal CRF (Covid-19 Relief Funding). (Source: Vermont Affordable Housing Coalition)
- 48% of renters are cost-burdened, meaning more than 30% of their income is being used to pay for housing. (Source: VAHC)

- Housing homeless Vermonters in hotels and motels around the state has greatly reduced what could have been a super-spreader of Covid. Only a handful of the homeless population has tested positive for Covid, as most can socially distance in their rooms. (Source: VT Digger “Reporter’s notebook: 2020 — the year Vermont transformed its homelessness response”)
- A 2019 Point of Count Snapshot by the Vermont Coalition to End Homelessness highlighted a correlation between homelessness and race. Only 1% of Vermont’s population is African American’s, yet 8% of African American’s in Vermont are homeless. Similarly, only 1% of Vermont’s population is Hispanic, but 4% of Hispanic Vermonters are homeless. (Source: VT Coalition to End Homelessness)

Plan of Action: We must work with the Vermont Affordable Housing Coalition and other resources such as the Vermont Coalition to End Homelessness , the Department of Children and Families, as well as our many shelters around Vermont.

- First and foremost, we must recognize that housing is nothing other than a human right that all people and Vermonters are entitled to.
- While the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board noted that Covid put a hold on affordable housing developments, but this winter-spring, there will be finished construction of 160 apartments across the state, ¼ of which being targeted towards people who have experienced homelessness. (Source: Vermont Housing and Coalition Board)
 - Additionally, 32 million dollars of CRF funds are being allocated to improve homeless shelters across the state
- We must work to improve the integrity of pre-existing structures. Programs such as Efficiency Vermont and Champlain Valley Weatherization help to ensure the efficiency of energy, as well as saving both tenants and landlords on utility bills. By investing in already standing structures, we can continue to offer affordable housing for Vermonters. (Source: CVOEO)
- As of September 2020, The Department of Children and Families (DCF) pledged to use a number of their CARES Act funds to hire 90 housing advocates
 - Additionally, 3.5 million dollars of CARES Act money will be allocated to “rapid resolution funds” to address barriers to families housing plans (Source: VAHC)
- We must work with the Vermont Affordable Housing Coalition to ensure that new and existing structures maintain affordable cost, meaning Vermonters will not be using more than 30% of their income to afford housing.

Conclusion:

- I would like to once more thank everyone for the opportunity to speak today. It is truly my honor to be joined by wonderful community leaders such as: _____

Attachments:

<https://legislature.vermont.gov/Documents/2020/WorkGroups/House%20General/Housing/Homelessness/W~Chris%20Donnelly~Affordable%20Housing%20COVID-19%20Response%20Needs%20and%20Projections~4-28-2020.pdf>

Sources:

VT Digger: <https://vtdigger.org/2020/12/31/2020-the-year-vermont-transformed-its-homelessness-response/>

VT Digger: <https://vtdigger.org/2020/06/07/after-covid-19-crisis-where-will-homeless-vermonters-go/>

VAHC Annual Meeting: <https://www.vtaffordablehousing.org/2020/09/18/annual-meeting-brings-together-vt-affordable-housing-homelessness-advocates/>

VT Coalition to End Homelessness: <https://helpingtohousevt.org/2019/05/14/2019-point-in-time-count-report/>

VAHC About Us: (Mission) <https://www.vtaffordablehousing.org/about/>

CVOEO Weatherization (Partnership w Efficiency Vermont): https://www.cvoeo.org/?fuseaction=dep_intro&dept_id=3