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TO: Department of Housing and Community Development  
FROM: Maryellen Griffin, Staff Attorney, Vermont Legal Aid, Inc.  
DATE: February 24, 2025  
SUBJECT: Comments on Con Plan

Dear Department of Housing and Community Development,

Thank you for your ongoing work to ensure that federal and state housing funds effectively serve Vermonters. I am writing to express my concern about the high rates of eviction from subsidized housing, which directly contribute to the growing crisis of homelessness in our state.

While Vermont has made strides in housing individuals experiencing homelessness, with initiatives like the 2016 Executive Order and the VHHP program, the rates of eviction from subsidized housing is alarmingly high.

Over 30% of evictions pending in court are filed by non-profit housing providers, according to a review of the judiciary data by my colleague Jean Murray. This is particularly concerning given that only an estimated 13% of all tenants have subsidies tied to the building.

The consequences of these evictions are severe. Most people evicted from subsidized housing become ineligible for subsidized housing in future and are unable to find stable housing in the private market. This often leads to chronic homelessness, with significant costs to individuals, families, and taxpayers.

Data<sup>1</sup> from the Department for Children and Families (DCF) highlights the urgency of this issue. Approximately 500 people enter Coordinated Entry each

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<sup>1</sup> January report on December <https://legislature.vermont.gov/assets/Legislative-Reports/Act-113-Monthly-Housing-Report-01.31.2025.pdf> Of 565 entering into coordinated entry in

month, with a quarter of those returning to homelessness after having previously exited to permanent housing. This cycle of homelessness is unsustainable and demands immediate attention

<i>Data based on Act 113 reports from DCF</i>	Total entering coordinated entry	Number returning to homelessness after exiting to permanent housing	Number returning to homelessness after exiting to non-permanent placements	Total percent Return to homelessness after exiting homelessness
December, 2024	565	178 (31.5%)	91 (16%)	47.5%
November, 2024	403	115 (28.5%)	79 (19.6%)	48.1%
October, 2024	532	110 (20.67%)	122 (23%)	43.67%
September, 2024	495	132 (26.66%)	93 (18%)	44.66%

The solution to homelessness is homes. Housing is cheaper and better than shelters or hospitals or prison or the street. But it is clear that some housing, or a certain mix of types of housing, meets this need better than others. As the data shows, some housing is just cycling people through homelessness to housing to homelessness, and some is stable, long term, and good value for all. We need to know which is which and grow the housing that works.

The House Human Services Committee has been taking testimony from a number of subsidized housing providers who have developed innovative and effective programs to help people stay stably housed. For example, Elise Shanbaker from

December, 178 were returning to homelessness after exiting to permanent housing, in addition to 91 returning from non-permanent placements.

December report on November <https://legislature.vermont.gov/assets/Reports/Act-113-Monthly-Housing-Reporting-12.31.2024.pdf> In November, of the 403 people who became homeless, 194 were returning to homelessness after exiting the system, and 115 of those returnees had exited to permanent housing.

November report on October numbers <https://legislature.vermont.gov/assets/Reports/Act-113-DCF-Housing-Report-11.30.2024.pdf> Of the 532 people who became homeless in October, 232 were returnees, and 110 had been in permanent housing.

October report, on September data <https://legislature.vermont.gov/assets/Reports/Act-113-DCF-Housing-Report-10.31.2024.pdf> In September, 495 people became homeless. Of those, 225 were returnees including 132 from permanent placements

Addison Housing Works said their Family Support Program, which focuses on families at risk of eviction, has a 96% success rate – 96% of families in the program remained stably housed at the end of the year.

I urge the Con Plan to prioritize the following:

- **Data Collection:** Gather comprehensive data on eviction rates among subsidized housing providers, identifying those with the lowest rates and the strategies they employ.

- **Funding Priorities:** Allocate funding to support and expand programs that have proven successful in reducing rates of eviction.

- **Policy Tools:** Explore and implement policy tools that incentivize eviction reduction measures and support services that reduce rates of eviction.

As the attached bathtub graphic illustrates, we need a two-pronged approach to reduce homelessness in Vermont. First, we must turn off the tap by preventing evictions from subsidized housing and reducing the flow of people into homelessness. Second, we must ensure that any remaining inflow is matched by an equal outflow through effective homelessness prevention and rapid rehousing strategies. By prioritizing data collection, funding, and policy tools that support eviction prevention, the Con Plan can contribute to both aspects of this approach and help create a sustainable cycle where homelessness is rare, brief, and non-recurring

Thank you for your time and consideration.

To reverse rising levels of homelessness, we need to reduce housing and financial insecurity until no one is driven into homelessness.

**HOW DO WE STOP IT?**

