

## We're making measurable progress in Connecticut

Homelessness takes too great a toll on human lives and imposes heavy costs that public systems (emergency services, jails/prisons, schools, hospitals) cannot afford to bear.

Thanks to the support of state policymakers, we've created an effective and efficient homelessness response system. Real-time data on homelessness has enabled the state to define and measure whether it has achieved an end to homelessness, specifically defined as ensuring that homelessness is rare, brief, and a one-time experience.

## Milestones

Connecticut has made significant progress in ending homelessness, including:

- CT was recognized in 2016 by the federal government as one of three states to end homelessness among Veterans.
- CT has seen a 25% reduction in homelessness since 2007.
- In October 2018, 186 adults experienced chronic homelessness in CT, a record low.
- As part of a recent challenge on family homelessness, providers across CT were able to help 280 families with 550 children exit homelessness into stable housing in less than 80 days.

**We must maintain this momentum by preserving investments in housing solutions that work.**

## Legislative Agenda

**Ensure the key housing and homelessness resources necessary to maintain the state's progress on ending homelessness.**

**Restore Housing Support Services for High Need Populations – restoring \$1.4M at the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) will bring the allocation back to \$24.2M**

Supportive housing continues to be the most effective model to assist people with disabilities and chronic health conditions exit homelessness and is proven to cut public system cost by up to 70%.<sup>1</sup> We must maintain the necessary housing stabilization support and wraparound services that keep highly vulnerable people stable in their housing. These funds should be restored to FY2017 levels (\$24.2 million) at the DMHAS. Funding rescissions have led to a gap in the service system that is being felt across the state. The restoration will serve approximately 189 individuals. There are many Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) units and Public Housing Authority (PHA) units that do not have the necessary supportive housing services.

**Preserve the Housing/Homelessness Resources at the Department of Housing – Housing and Homeless Line Item (\$78.6M), Homeless Youth Line Item (\$2.3M), and Community Investment Account (CIA) funds at DOH**

Continued investment in the state's rental assistance for supportive housing, housing assistance for youth experiencing homelessness, and the Coordinated Access Networks (CAN) system is critical to maintain our progress. Community Investment Account funds have been a key source of discretionary funding for ending homelessness and should be preserved. Preserving the homeless youth program that provides critical housing services for youth and young adults will

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<sup>1</sup> UNC at Charlotte (2014), Moore place permanent supportive housing evaluation study year 1 report

provide greater access to crisis response services where there are geographic gaps, increase outreach and identification of homeless/housing unstable youth/young adults, and reduce safety risks such as sex trading, suicide, and dropping out of school.

**Maintain support for Coordinated Access Networks – Add funding for Coordinated Access Network (CAN) infrastructure including the 2-1-1 housing unit to the Department of Housing’s Housing/Homeless Services Line Item (\$1.55M)**

Coordinated Access Networks (CANs) serve as the regional “front doors” to homeless services, streamline access to assistance, ensure that people are matched to appropriate interventions, and help to troubleshoot barriers to housing. 2-1-1 serves as the statewide single point of entry to the CANs. By organizing providers to coordinate and target housing resources, CANs ensure that those with the highest needs are prioritized for assistance and that public resources are used to achieve maximum impact and efficiency.

The state’s support to CANs has been through discretionary funding from the Community Investment Account (CIA) over the past three years. Creating a line item for this funding in the Department of Housing’s budget will ensure a stable, annualized source of support for the CANs and 2-1-1.

**Expand Rapid Re-Housing Resources – \$2M at the Department of Housing**

The success of the homeless system depends on the outflow of residents from emergency shelter to free up space for new households and ensure that more intensive interventions like permanent supportive housing and rental assistance are reserved for those with high service needs. Rapid Re-Housing assists many households to rapidly exit shelter and obtain permanent housing as quickly as possible. Since August of 2015, 93 percent of rapid rehousing participants have not returned to homelessness. There is a critical gap in Rapid Re-housing assistance, which increases lengths of stay of people in shelter and reduces shelter capacity overall. An additional \$2M for Rapid Re-Housing efforts will allow 900 more individuals to be re-housed.

**Identify and Educate Students Experiencing Homelessness**

CT should align its education statutes (Conn Gen Stat §§ 10-253, 10-186) with federal McKinney-Vento rights. Doing so will clarify the rights of students experiencing homelessness to immediately enroll in school, a critical component to preventing youth and family homelessness. Additionally, clarifying the process when a disagreement arises will help districts and students to implement a consistent, predictable path as described in federal law. These measures encourage a friendly atmosphere where students can remain schooled, while providing a safe zone for students to discuss their homeless status with their school. These provisions will add no additional financial burden to districts or the state, and already exist in federal law

**Continue Strategic Capital Investments in Affordable Housing -- by providing \$165M for the Affordable Housing FLEX Fund and \$40M for the state Housing Trust Fund, per year**

Helping rent-burdened and homeless families to obtain permanent, affordable housing as quickly as possible and ensuring that they have access to services that enable them to remain housed and become self-sufficient is critical to Connecticut’s economic growth and child development. Affordable housing is a proven solution for achieving economic mobility, stability, and resolving homelessness amongst families. We must continue to make critical capital investments at the Department of Housing, in order to prevent and end all forms of homelessness and sustain the progress we’re making in Connecticut.

Reaching Home is the campaign to prevent and end homelessness in Connecticut. With more than 200 partners representing a variety of sectors, Reaching Home works to the develop public policies, community support, systems and resources that are bringing an end to homelessness in Connecticut.