

Vermont Affordable Housing Coalition FINAL FY 07 APPROPRIATIONS FOR HOUSING

Vermont Housing and Conservation Board (Sec. 232, VHCB; Sec. 268, PTT; Sec. 272, Waterfall)

Original Priority: Support full statutory funding from the property transfer tax (PTT) at \$19.9 million. At a minimum, VHCB should receive \$16.4 million – the actual, total FY 06 appropriation plus the 4.5% increase promised in the FY06 budget. The Governor's FY 07 budget proposed level-funding the base at \$13.1 million – \$6.7 million short of projected full formula funding.

House action: (1) Base PTT appropriation increased by 4.5%, or \$592,703, to \$13,763,883; (2) \$3.5 million PTT waterfall above January 2006 forecast of \$40.2 million (70% housing, 30% conservation); (3) another \$1 million in FY 06 General Fund waterfall for housing; and (4) 4.5% increase for FY 08.

Senate action: Concurred with House, except PTT waterfall not earmarked 70%-30% for housing and conservation; Senate added language prohibiting the use of HOME funds for rental assistance.

Final: Senate version prevailed in conference; upgraded revenue projections make it likely VHCB will receive all waterfall funds for a total of \$18,263,883.

Homeless Shelters and Services (Sec. 133, DCF/OEO)

Original Priority: Support the Vermont Coalition to End Homelessness in requesting \$942,000 for homeless shelter operating costs and prevention services through the VT Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) within the Dept. for Children and Families (DCF). This represents an increase of \$400,000 from last year's funding level of \$542,000. The increase is needed to meet rising costs and demand for services. The Governor recommended level funding.

House action: Level-funded at \$542,000.

Senate action: Concurred with House.

Back Rent Program (Sec. 138-141, DCF/GA)

Original Priority: Increase Category II appropriation from \$50,000 to \$250,000 to provide a full year's funding; level fund Category I at \$527,000. Funded through the General Assistance (GA) budget of DCF's Economic Services Division, this critical prevention program provides up to two or three months of rent or mortgage arrearage payments to families who are eligible for Reach-Up and face eviction or foreclosure. The program should be expanded to include single individuals and households without minor children. Eligible expenditures should be expanded to include property tax arrears. Economic Services should work with advocates to maximize program effectiveness. The Governor's budget again proposed to eliminate Category II funding and level-fund Category I at \$527,000.

House action: (1) Restored \$50,000 Category II funding for FY 07, and (2) added language reforming program (eliminates Category II after FY 07, expands eligibility for Category I).

Senate action: Concurred with House on numbers, further refined language.

Final: Numbers remained the same, language was further refined.

Temporary Housing Assistance (Sec. 138 & 139b, DCF/GA)

Original Priority: Also administered by Economic Services, this program provides last-resort housing for Vermonters who face homelessness. The Coalition requests level funding at approximately \$550,000. Eligibility for assistance should remain at up to 84 days, with at least \$150,000 set-aside for assistance beyond day 28.

House action: Level-funded, maintained 84-day maximum eligibility.

Senate action: Concurred with House.

Assistive Community Care Services Program (Sec. 107, OVHA; Sec. 149, DAIL)

Original Priority: Increase funding by approximately \$459,000, representing a *per diem* provider reimbursement increase of \$4.75, from \$30.25 to \$35. This still leaves providers \$7 short of 100% reimbursement at approximately \$42 per day (excluding room and board). The increase also reflects growth in caseload from 535 to 700 a year. By helping seniors and people with disabilities

live independently in Licensed Community Care Homes and Assisted Living facilities, ACCS helps the state avoid spending more of its own scarce funds on more expensive nursing home care.

House action: Increased by \$100,000 in General Fund moneys, plus \$142,836 Medicaid match, for \$1 *per diem* increase.

Senate action: \$3 *per diem* increase; added study on sustainability of long term care system.

Final: Senate prevailed in conference, with further refinements to study language.

Transitional housing for ex-offenders (Sec. 159, DOC; Sec. 4 of H. 864, Capital Bill)

Original Priorities: Support recommendations of several regional advisory groups, to create and fund programs that combine case management services by the Department of Corrections (DOC) with the creation of transitional housing facilities owned and operated by nonprofit housing development organizations. Recommendations for Chittenden County include:

- \$1.35 million in capital funding to acquire and renovate buildings for two transitional housing programs currently in development – \$650,000 for Northern Lights Consortium (9-10 units exclusively for women) and \$700,000 for Dismas House II (10-12 units for both men and women). The overall need in Chittenden County is for 30-35 units.
- \$475,000 annually from DOC's transitional housing budget to fund the operating expenses of the two projects, including supportive programming and building-related costs.
- Double overall DOC funding for transitional housing from \$1 million to 2 million statewide.
- Capital projects should not be funded from existing housing sources and should be administered by entities with greater experience in underwriting housing development.
- Increased funding for re-entry housing specialists
- Comprehensive re-entry planning and supportive programming
- Collaboration and communication between DOC, communities and service providers, including increased community notification and information sharing by DOC
- Expand availability of transitional bed units in correctional facilities

House action: (1) Set aside \$335,000 for operating expenses within DOC's existing transitional housing budget of \$1.025 million (\$225,000 for Northern Lights, \$110,000 for Dismas II); (2) added language requiring DOC to work with local partners to fully fund annualized operating budget in FY 08; and (3) House Capital Bill gave \$463,768 for rehab for both projects.

Senate action: Removed \$335,000 earmark for two projects; left intent language intact; Senate Capital Bill provided no funding for capital construction costs.

Final: House version essentially prevailed, though with a somewhat weakened commitment from DOC to provide \$335,000 in operating costs; Capital bill conferees agreed on \$445,000.

Mental Health Housing Contingency Fund (Sec. 122, Mental Health)

Original Priority: Request 100% increase from \$300,000 to \$600,000. This fund assists people with psychiatric disabilities to live independently by providing assistance with such expenses as first and last month's rent, utility deposits, paying rent during a hospital stay, etc. The program has been level-funded since it was created in 1988. Over the years it has not kept pace with inflation, serving fewer people while the need has grown. A \$300,000 increase would make up for the value lost to inflation over the last 18 years.

House action: Level-funded.

Senate action: Added \$90,000 for total budget of \$390,000.

Final: Senate prevailed.

HomeShare Vermont (Sec. 150, DAIL)

Original Priority: Support an increase of \$150,000 for the Central Vermont and Chittenden County programs, which allow seniors to live independently and age in place by sharing their homes. Funding would increase the base for the two existing programs and allow expansion into Lamoille, Orange and Addison Counties. Current state funding for these cost-saving programs totals \$77,545 per year. The Governor proposed level funding.

House action: \$75,000 increase.

Senate action: Concurred with House.

Housing and Supportive Services Program (Sec. 107, OVHA; Sec. 150, DAIL)

Original Priority: Support at least level funding at \$799,000. In collaboration with the HASS providers, DAIL should examine how program beneficiaries and services have been affected by moving some of the funding into the Choices for Care Waiver and recommend programmatic changes to restore services.

House action: Level-funded at \$535,000 GF & \$264,247 Medicaid match for total of \$799,247.

Senate action: Concurred with House.

General Assistance/Emergency Assistance (Sec. 137a & 138, DCF/GA)

Original Priority: Support the Homeless Coalition in its request for an increase in the housing and basic needs allowances.

House action: Level-funded.

Senate action: Level-funded; added language for flexible pilot program.

Final: Senate version prevailed, with additional refinements to flexible pilot language.

CVOEO Mobile Home Project (Sec. 220, DHCA)

Senate added language to Dept. of Housing & Community Affairs (DHCA) budget setting aside \$60,000 for program, same as in FY 06 budget.

Final: Senate language included.

Community Development Block Grants (Sec. 223, DHCA)

Senate added same language as in FY 06 budget maintaining Consolidated Plan priorities for perpetual affordability, family housing, and lowest income people, etc.

Final: Senate language included, with compromise wording on elderly housing priority.

Planning (Sec. 220, DHCA; Sec. 268, PTT)

Original Priority: Fully fund municipal and regional planning fund with statutory share of transfer tax.

House action: (1) Base PTT appropriation increased by 4.5%, or \$159,552, to \$3,844,469; and (2) 4.5% increase for FY 08.

Senate action: Concurred with House.

Economic Justice Issues – Support the following VLIAC priorities:

- **VT Weatherization Program** – Increase base services and oppose raids on funds.
Final: \$750,000 increase in base; \$2.5 million raid on surplus to pay for roads avoided.
- **Individual Development Accounts** – Increase appropriation by \$91,000.
Final: \$50,000 increase in one-time moneys added to FY 06 funding level of \$159,000.
- **Micro-Business Development Program** – Increase funding by \$100,000.
Final: \$60,000 increase in the base funding for Micro-Business.
- **Job Start** – Recapitalize fund, move from VEDA to OEO (\$500,000 total).
Final: \$50,000 in one-time moneys for recapitalization; program stays with VEDA.
- **Vermont Legal Aid** – Secure COLA increase (\$70,000).
Final: \$25,000 increase in base, to be matched with federal funds.
- **Health Care Ombudsman** – Increase funding for position (\$65,000).
Final: \$27,676 (state) & \$38,233 (federal) one-time monies from Global Commitment
- **Health Care** – Maintain services & full access for low-income Vermonters.
Final: Catamount Health legislation passed; lowers premiums for low-income Vermonters. Chronic Care management and Common Sense initiatives enacted; available to currently uninsured.
- **TANF reauthorization** – Monitor impact of federal legislation on low-income Vermonters.
Final: Work Group created to make recommendations to the Vermont Legislature.

Minimum Wage – Support Livable Wage Coalition and VLIAC in seeking increase and COLA for tipped minimum wage employees and redefining who is a tipped worker.

Final: Legislation did not pass out of Senate committee this year.